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HALF A LIFE.

BY

GEORGE WEBBE DASENT, D.C.L.,

AUTHOR OF

"ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE," "THREE TO ONE,"
ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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HALF A LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I WALKED ABOUT LONDON WITH MY FATHER.

WHEN I got home I had still a day or two to spend before I went back to Westminster. I call to mind those days much because they were for the most part spent with my father, who also had some idle time on his hands—or on his feet, I might say, as he spent them in walking about London.

It is very odd how very little fathers and sons know of one another, sometimes, though they live for years and years under the same roof. One might almost say that they slept, but did not live, in the same house—they are so much together, and yet so far apart.

VOL. II.

1

Of course, every father and son will say, "Not know my father!" or "Not know my son!" and go on fancying they know one another, but the fact is as I say. There is not one son or one father in a thousand who knows anything the one of the other.

There, in the house, grows up the son, nursed and watched by the mother, and seeing much more of her than of his other parent. However near the father, he is always a little farther off than the mother to the child, and to a child that little is a great way. Thus it is very often from a wish to save the father trouble that he remains in the house almost a stranger to his own children, or, at best, becomes a *deus ex machina*, to be called in with his authority on extraordinary occasions, to cut Gordian knots, and solve domestic difficulties—as when a boy is refractory about paying a visit to the dentist, or a girl breaks her governess's heart by idleness at her lessons. In this way the father becomes, as I have said, a magnificent background in the family. He is always there, a mighty power, ready to interfere if wanted; but, as in a well-ordered household, he seldom or never interferes, the result is that he lives at a distance from his children, and, though they would all declare they loved him tenderly,

the children love their mothers more, and he ends at last by being only respected. I fancy the case is different when the children are grown men and women. They always love their mothers, even from their infancy, but it is only in after years that they really learn to love their fathers.

This is true, putting the question generally, and without reference to this or that family, but the case becomes much stronger when, as in mine, the father strides off at an early hour, and his children only see him at rare intervals for the first ten years of their lives. In my case my father was off and away to the Treasury almost before I came down from the nursery, and I was gone to bed before he came back at night. What chance had we, then, of ever meeting? He knew I was there, and that I was safe and sound under my mother's care; and I knew he was there, and that I was safe and sound under his supreme sway. He was as a God in the house to me, and I was as a child of God to him.

Well! what I wish to point out is, that it is not so easy to shake off these early views and feelings till one has grown up. While one is growing up, it is very hard for a son to be on entirely easy terms with his father, and I have

always looked on those fathers who live as a brother rather than as a father with their children as having mastered a secret, and achieved a success far more precious than if they had the philosopher's stone in their waistcoat pocket.

Now I verily believe that my father would have played with me all day long, only he could not. How can a man have time to play who is always doing the nation's accounts? His playing and unbending therefore was a perpetual paulo-post-future, if you know what that is. It was like going to see the Tower, or the Exchange, or St. Paul's, something that we all of us are about to do all the days of our lives, only we never do it.

I verily believe that in his heart of hearts my father often said, "To-morrow I'll take Frank to see the Tower," or "To-morrow, if I get away early, I'll take him and regularly lionize the City with him."

But somehow or other that to-morrow never came.

Sometimes, indeed, we went out in a boat when we were at the seashore, but it was always pain and grief to us, for if there was one thing more than another that my mother hated, it was what she called "a little boat," and she

watched us in agony all the time we were afloat. But I am now speaking far more of the town than the country ; and besides, in the country, my mother was always with us, and it is well known that in a family, just as much as everywhere else, three are no company.

And so it was that a great part of my knowledge of my father came from those few days we spent together walking about London. Then I first learnt to love the gentleness and easiness of his character, as well as his modesty and love of truth. I remember when I went to bed one night saying to myself—

“How unjust I have been to him all this time, and how true it was of Irwin when I told him I loved him more than any one else in the world except my mother, to say—

“‘Stop! stop! you may have another friend and a better friend than I can ever be to you, but you can never have another father.’”

I think, too, and it consoles me to think so, that my father grew fonder of me and proud of me from that day. It was as though he rubbed his eyes all at once, and said—

“And I, too, have begotten a man into the world;” for to his eyes I had been but a child before that. How strange it is a woman from

the very first feels that she has brought a man into the world, but the knowledge comes slowly on a father, and very often he cannot see it at all.

And so we, too, were both of us very happy roaming over the great desert of London, and admiring its brick and stone and mortar.

My father, you know, was a Londoner born, and he seemed to know it all as if by instinct. How he led me through courts and alleys now long since pulled down! The time I speak of, you know, was before the love of new streets took possession of us all. At that time, if any one wished to drive to the City from Piccadilly or any of those parts, he had either to take the Oxford Street line and so along Holborn, or the Strand line through Leicester Square, and out at the corner by Hemming's Row, and so past St. Martin's Church into the Strand. Then, as now, Lincoln's Inn blocked up the way when you had got as far as that, but if one wanted to go anywhere short of Lincoln's Inn, one had to turn up or down from the Strand or Holborn as the case might be.

In those days, in fact, the passage east out of the north corner of Leicester Square did not exist. Garrick Street was not even thought of, and how people drove to Covent Garden, either

the market, or the theatre from the West End, passes my comprehension. But everywhere, in the City and out of it, there were short cuts for foot-passengers, which made it possible to pass more quickly on foot from point to point than along the crowded thoroughfares in a carriage.

There was one remarkable passage, I remember, from the Temple to Bridge Street, Blackfriars, through the "slums" of Alsatia, or Whitefriars. We passed through it sometimes during those happy days on our way to the City, and there sat an old Irishman in a green coat who had a stall and sold ballads. He was a great admirer of O'Connell, then at the height of his glory. Side by side with him sat a hideous old hag—I beg her pardon, no doubt she was a beauty in her youth, and much respected at Billingsgate in her old age. Her occupation was in scraping whelks and cockles and mussels out of their shells, and in boiling them all up with vinegar and water, into a mess of witches' broth, far more horrible, to my mind, than any to be supped on at the Brocken, but which the colliers and dustmen of Puddle Dock and the stokers at the gas-works hard by swallowed with a zest which showed, that so far as their digestions were concerned, she was the right woman in the right place.

Shunning these dainties, we passed on to have our luncheon at Birch's, in Cornhill, not on turtle soup, my father would have called *that* "very greedy," but on the buns for which the shop was justly famous.

That day I remember we saw the Exchange, Gresham's old Exchange, not Tite's, in which the only old relic is the statue of Gresham himself, which escaped the fire some years after the time of which I write. On the same day we saw the Tower, then not so good a sight as it is at present, for the Norman Chapel in the White Tower was then full of records, and many of the dungeons now shown were then not to be seen. But for all that we saw the men in armour, and the block, and the axe, and asked for the rack in vain, though we saw the thumb-screws, and I tried them on. And we saw the regalia, minus the Koh-i-Noor, which was then safe in the keeping of Runjeet Singh in the Punjab, and when we got home to dinner we were both so tired that we fell fast asleep in our chairs as soon as it was over.

Another day we went to the City all on business, as my father said, and where do you think we went? Why to the spot of all others that was most mysterious to us all in Wimpole Street,

except to my father. To old Ball's office or country house, or whatever it was, in Great St. Helen's, Bishopsgate Street.

I daresay some of you even now do not know where Great St. Helen's is. Somewhere in the City of course, is all the answer you would give to the question. For myself I did not know much more of it then than I do now. We went to it along Oxford Street, and Holborn, and Newgate Street, and so out into Cheapside, and between the Bank and the Exchange, by Threadneedle Street, and so on into Bishopsgate Street, and there we found it a good bit down on the right.

"Here it is," said my father, as he turned in, "and now, Frank, I hope you won't mind waiting a little, while I see Mr. Ball on business."

Not at all, of course I did not mind waiting, and in fact I was very glad to wait, for had I not mastered one of the secrets which had so long distracted the faithful Mary and myself. Here I was before old Ball's office, and there at No. — was the place where he made his money, on which he lived in such good style in Wimpole Street, over the way.

So I waited. Now I must tell you there is nothing, or at least I then thought there was nothing, very interesting in Great St. Helen's, or

rather, to beg its pardon, St. Helen's Place. Had I remembered, or even known that I stood on the site of a famous nunnery, founded in the thirteenth century, in honour of St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, and that its old hall existed down to the year 1799, when St. Helen's Place was erected on the site, I might have been more amused ; still more amused and instructed I might have been had I known how long I was to wait, and turned aside to see the church of the nunnery, which still exists as a parish church, and is full of interesting monuments. There lies John Crosby, Alderman of London, the founder of Crosby Hall, which is another of those sights that you have all been about to see every day of your lives, and yet have never seen. Pray, go and see it as soon as you can, for it may be like those wills that so many of you put off, waiting till death disposes of you before you have disposed of your property.

There, too, you may read on an altar tomb this short inscription :—

“SIR THOMAS GRESHAM, KNIGHT,
Buried Decr. 15th, 1579.”

Here, too, you will see the tomb of Sir Julius Cæsar, who died in 1636, Master of the Robes,

and Under-Chancellor of the Exchequer to King James the First, of whom Pennant tells us thus much :—"His epitaph is cut on a black slab in form of a piece of parchment with a seal appendant, by which he gives his bond to heaven to resign his life willingly whenever it should please God to call him."

All these I might have seen for sixpence had I known or thought of them, but as it was I paced up and down before old Ball's dirty door, for at least two hours, until I began to think my father must have emerged from his friend's office by some back way, and forgotten my existence.

But at last, just as I was getting very hungry, he appeared, with old Ball at his heels, whose last words were :—

"Good-bye, good-bye. I will be sure to secure you that investment." But as soon as he saw me I observed that he turned short round on his heel, and retired like a dusty old spider into his office.

"I am afraid you thought me very long, Frank," said my father, "but really Mr. Ball is so very interesting that it is very hard to part from him even when one comes to see him on business. But let us go and have some lunch. Let me see, I will take you to Joe's."

Now, as to who Joe was, and what he had to

do with lunch, I could not tell, but after walking back along Bishopsgate, and passing the east end of the Exchange we dived down a narrow street, and in a moment we entered "Joe's."

"Joe's," you must know, was, and perhaps is—for "Joe's" supplied wants which never die, the great want of dinner or luncheon—a tavern where you could always get a chop or a steak tender and well cooked, and the fun of the place, at least to me, consisted in this, that you could see your food cooked on a gridiron at one end of the room, while you waited for it at the other.

I remember that when my father gave the order, which was one chop for himself and two for me, as I was so hungry, the waiter went down to the cook at the gridiron, and called out, "A single chop, and a chop and another to follow." In a very little while we got our food, and never before or since had I or have I tasted chops half so good, washed down with such good stout; but then it must be recollected that I have not before every chop I have eaten paced up and down the pavement of Great St. Helen's for two hours in a late September day.

When we got home, I duly informed Mary that I now knew where old Ball lived, and that it was ever so far off in the City.

"Dear me, Master Frank!" said Mary; "you've never been and gone and seen him where he makes his money?"

"Yes, but I have, Mary, and if he makes it all there, all I can say is—he makes it in a very grimy, nasty place. When I make money, I hope it will be in a more pleasant way."

"Lor! Master Frank!" said Mary; "you'll never need to make money for yourself, what with your papa and your mamma, and what your dear old grandpapa left them. Do you ever think of your grandpapa and dear old Southampton Row, and Mr. Hill's buns? I'll bet a penny"—Mary, you must know, often betted money in this reckless way—"I'll bet a penny, them buns you bought in the City weren't half so nice as your old buns."

"No, they were not, Mary," I cried, "and I have not forgotten my grandfather, nor Southampton Row, nor Mr. Hill, nor you and your care of me."

"There's a dear," said Mary. "Do you know, Master Frank, I could a'most kiss you to death, I'm that fond of you."

"Get along, Mary! I'm over the age for kissing; why, I'm nearly eighteen!"

"Just past kissing time and time to kiss again,

Master Frank," said Mary. "There's one kind of kissing that goes off, and another kind that comes on; you're just betwixt and between. Never say your kissing days are over, Master Frank, for that's a wicked story."

And so Mary ran downstairs with a laugh, and I have no doubt told cook and Thomas that Master Frank had been and seen in the city carts full of gold and silver standing at the door of Mr. Ball's office.

"And so you have been to see Mr. Ball's office, Frank," said my mother, just before dinner, when my father was out of the room; "and what was it like?"

"Very like a spider's nest, all cobwebs and dust," I said.

"And *how* long was your father there?" said my mother, with an accent on the *how*.

"Oh, so long!" I said.

"I did not know," said my mother, "that it took a spider so long to throw its web round any one, and so, if Mr. Ball is a spider, as you say, I trust he has not thrown his web over your father."



CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH SOMETHING HAPPENS TO MY FATHER.

WHEN I went to bed that night, I began to think over what my mother had said.

"Throw a web round my father!" I said; "how can old Ball throw a web round any one, much less my father?"

Then I fell a-thinking on old Ball, and what he could possibly do in that office of his. He only had the ground floor, I knew, of that dingy house in Great St. Helen's, for on the door-posts were written, on either side, after the fashion of houses let in chambers, "Ground floor, Mr. Ball." Mark that; not "Ball and Co.," or "Cup and Ball, ivory merchants," but plain "Ball," as if old Ball, one and indivisible, was a firm in himself, and could bowl over all comers.

"If it were the fashion for women to go into business," I mused, "it might have been 'Ball and Daughter ;' " but there it was, plain "Ball." On the first floor, oddly enough, were the offices of "Claw, Tooth, and Nail," a well-known firm of West India merchants, which had boiled down into syrup for themselves many a West Indian proprietor; and above them, on the second floor, were "Weevil and Weazles," corn merchants.

It was plain, therefore, that all old Ball's business was done on his ground floor, and if he spun cobwebs and threw them over any one, they must all have been made downstairs.

Then I went on to fancy what his business could be, and what the investments which he said he would take care to secure for my father. "Every one knows who my father is," I went on saying to myself. "We are the last of a decayed old family, and our name lives in the annals of the midland counties, and now we are just lifting our heads again, and my father has climbed in a slothful sort of way, half way up the official tree. Not high enough to satisfy Irwin or Mr. Chrysostom, I daresay, but still we are respectable, and respected. But who knows anything of old Ball? Whence did he roll into the world? and whither is he rolling? Rolling in money, I dare

say, but that is not enough to make a man respected or respectable."

By this time I dare say I was half asleep, for I was not given to lie awake thinking. No one is at eighteen, but still I went on thinking and musing.

"After all what is old Ball to me, or Mary Ball? Ah! Mary Ball—well, I should be sorry if Mary Ball were not respectable—I mean if old Ball should turn out to be a spider throwing webs over my father. Why then Mary Ball would be a spider too, and perhaps she might throw webs over me. What, Mary a spider! Never!"

But for all that, in a moment or two after, when I was really sound asleep, Mary did take the shape of a spider. Yes! of a money-spider, and all at once I thought I stood inside old Ball's offices, and took in at a glance all its secrets, and there, each in their separate corner, hung Mary and her father spinning webs of gold, and as soon as they had spun enough a great beetle scuttled out from the hearth and swept up all the gold in a coal-scoop.

And then all at once I started up in bed and found it was all a dream, and I got up and looked

over the way at Mary Ball's window, and wondered what her dreams were like.

After that day and that dreamy night I thought a good deal more of the Balls. Once we had them to dinner, to meet Mr. Chrysostom, who with the winter had returned to town, and established himself in Bayswater, whither I often went with Irwin to see him. I was curious to know what my friend thought of our opposite neighbour, and I was not long before I asked him how he liked Mr. Ball.

"I neither like him nor dislike him," said my friend. "Your father seems to respect his judgment very much, and that is enough for you to know."

"But I want to know more about him!" I cried.

"Why not ask your father?" and so I did, but all the answer I could get was this—

"Mr. Ball is a capitalist."

Now, if I had then known as much of capitalists as I now do, I might not have been altogether content with this answer of my father's, for I have heard a capitalist defined as a man who goes into the City with no money of his own, and comes out of it with that of some one else, and in this respect the late Mr. John Shep-

herd was a capitalist, but in the greenness of my youth I fancied a capitalist must be a man who had capital, and so for a while I was satisfied about Mr. Ball, though even then I would have given a great deal to know what he did with his capital.

While I was indulging in these speculations and conjectures Black Monday came, and I went back to Westminster. How very different I was from the small boy whom the curly-headed Newton had led eight years before to see Gell's birds, beasts, and fishes!

All this time I have never told you what I was like, and for a very good reason. I did not wish to describe myself till I was past my childhood, and I had taken something of the shape I was to bear in the world as a man.

First of all, I was fair, with brown hair, turning to auburn in my beard and whiskers, which were then but just beginning to grow. Then my eyes were brown, bright brown, almost red when I was angry, which of course with my angelic temper was very seldom. If I have not told you before that my temper was angelic, it was from modesty, or because I wished you to find out that merit in me of your own selves. In figure I was slim, with small bones, and hands,

and feet, and ears, and Mary used to say I was very well made, but then Mary was very fond of me, and Mary had washed me when I was a little thing, not weighing twelve pounds. In stature I was of the middle height, neither tall nor short, and in constitution very strong and enduring, as has been proved by what I have gone through in life.

Have I anything more to tell? Yes, a good deal, you will say, as to your temper and mind. Well, you shall hear all that presently. But first I must tell you that now at eighteen, or just about it, I was in the townboys' eight, and also in their eleven. So here too Irwin and I ran neck-and-neck, and we used to be called the "Athletic Double Firsts." He played at football much better than I ever did, but I had the best of him in jumping, for I could jump up to my nose at the high jump, while he never reached the standard of his shoulder.

As for my temper it was as I have told you, angelic—except when anything put me out, and then I could be very angry, especially if I felt hurt or unjustly treated, and then, as the Scots say, I was neither "to haud nor to bind."

As to my mind, you are very silly to ask about it. Haven't I been showing it to you all through

this story ? You must be blind if you can't read some of it ; and, besides, was it not in process of formation, and don't you think it has already progressed wonderfully since you first made my acquaintance in Southampton Row ?

Well ! to Westminster I went back full of hope and strength, glad to meet my schoolfellows, and all in love with Irwin, the peerless Irwin. He had spent his holidays, as usual, in Ireland, down in the south, and always said it took him a fortnight to get rid of the brogue which he brought with him so thick that you could cut it with a knife. But that was all a story, for he spoke English with the utmost purity and with no brogue or accent at all. And so that half rolled on like those that had preceded it, and Irwin and I got prizes for essays and epigrams and we spoke speeches in school, dressed in our best, and in the estimation of the school, and perhaps of ourselves, we were thought very great "chucks" or swells. As for Irwin, he had always been so neat and natty, and always did everything in so dexterous a way, that his nickname was "Cutty," which at Westminster always meant some one who was the perfection of neatness and strength as opposed to the brute power of mere physical force.

I remember one Saturday night, towards the

end of that half—it was just before the rehearsal of the “Andria,” for that was the Play that year, my father began to talk again of retiring. He had served his time, he said, and longed for rest; some one else must do the national accounts.

“Who will do them as well, dear?” said my mother, who was doubtful what to say as to this retirement.

“Oh! as for that,” said my father, “there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. Besides, it’s only fair to the fellows down below to retire and let them step into my shoes.”

“Well!” said my mother, “we will not talk of it any more. We are very happy as we are, and you are not at all old; I might as well talk of retiring and giving up the cares of housekeeping. No! we will talk of it after Christmas, when Frank’s holidays are over. You don’t feel ill, do you?” she added, looking anxiously at my father.

“Ill!” exclaimed my father, “I never felt better in my life. Just as young, for that matter, as when I first saw you.”

“Ah, but pride goes before a fall,” said my mother, in a boding voice. “So it was then when you were so nearly lost, and so it may be now. Why don’t you say ‘*Unberufen*,’ as Mary Ball’s

German governess is always calling out ; or 'In good time be it spoken,' as the Scots say."

"Well, my dear," said my father, heartily, in a fine manly voice, "I'll say them both. '*Unberufen*,' and 'In good time be it spoken.' Will that satisfy you?"

So the matter dropped, and we all went to bed.

Not one week after, it was on the very next Friday, as black a Friday as ever was, just when I was about to speak my speech in school, the Monos, that is the Second Election in College who kept the door and brought up messages during school hours, came up school and called me down.

"You must go home, Franklin," said Dr. Williamson ; "your mother wants you."

So I walked down school, little expecting what was before me. At the school steps I met Thomas, with a note from my mother. All it said was,

"You must come home at once, my darling ; your father is very ill."

"Very ill !" I mechanically repeated ; "when was he very ill, Thomas ?"

"Early this morning, Master Frank," said Thomas. "Then, after breakfast, the doctor was sent for, and after he had stayed a bit, he said you must be sent for, and here I am and you must come home."

• We drove home as fast as ever we could, but we were too late; the man who not a week before had declared he felt as well as ever he did in his life had passed away from his office, not by retirement but by the hand of God. It was something of an apoplectic seizure, or a heart disease. Neither my mother nor I cared to decide which it was; all we knew and cared to know was that the dearest and best friend we had in the world had been taken from us on that sad morning.





CHAPTER III.

ON FAMILY MATTERS.

I HAVE before told you how death came into our house to visit my grandfather, more like a friend than an enemy, so gently and tenderly did he take him away, but it was very different when he took my father. We all felt, every one in the house, that we could not spare my father, and yet he was gone with little more warning than his father, before his time, before he had retired, and before he had settled his affairs. He made his will, indeed, some time before, and in it he had left all his property to his dear wife for her life, and after her death to me. Mr. Ball, as was not unnatural, seeing the respect my father had for him, was sole executor and trustee. But for some time we could not think of affairs or mo-

ney; all that my mother knew was, that the mainstay of the house was gone, and I knew it, and the servants knew it.

It happened, you know, that the Christmas holidays were very close, so there was no necessity for my return to school, so my mother and I spent them in grief and retirement, and it was not till they were almost over that either of us cared to attend to business, and we only lifted our heads to do so at the request of Mr. Ball and of our solicitor, who, as it turned out, was Mr. Ball's lawyer as well.

I remember very well Mr. Ball coming with the solicitor by appointment to see my mother, and my being present by her desire at the interview.

Now you all know there are lawyers and lawyers. Some people swear by their lawyers, and others at them. Some would do without them if they could, others would have them always at their elbow if it wasn't so expensive.

I am not at all sure that my mother had ever seen our lawyer in her life; my father, it seems, had kept his affairs very much to himself, and the lawyer and Mr. Ball knew much more about them than any one else now that he was gone.

It seems only like yesterday that the knock

came on the door—there were all knockers and no bells for visitors in those days—and Mr. Ball and Mr. Vowells—that was the lawyer's name—were shown up by Thomas.

I have already described Mr. Ball; if there was anything to find fault with in his manners, they were too good; he was like a perfect gentleman, who had unfortunately fallen into a vat of oil, so glib and soft and smooth-tongued he seemed. Mr. Vowells, I must say, was not so prepossessing; he was a lanthorn-jawed, sullen-faced man, with scrubby sandy whiskers, like a badly-grown plantation, and very rebellious hair, that would never lie smooth, but threw out feathers all over his head. One of his eyes, too, stuck out more than the other, and was what might be called goggled, and no wonder, for on a closer examination it turned out to be a false eye of glass.

How he had lost it no one knew—at least, no one that we knew ever knew. Perhaps an infuriated client or rival practitioner had gouged it out, but so it was, it was gone, and glass filled its place.

"We have only called," said Mr. Ball, in the softest voice, "because we could not help it." Here he looked at Mr. Vowells, and that gentle-

man nodded assent, after which he drew forth a large red and green silk handkerchief, and wiped his eyes and blew his nose feebly, as much as to say, "If I dared I could blow it much louder."

"It was necessary," Mr. Ball proceeded, "that you should be informed of the state of my poor friend's affairs; and though no man is less disposed to profane the sanctuary of grief, this intrusion became a duty, especially as our mutual friend, Mr. Vowells, knows that your lamented husband desired us, in a memorandum deposited with the will, to undertake this melancholy duty as soon as it was convenient."

"It is perfectly convenient," said my poor mother, smothering her tears. "Frank and I are quite ready to hear what you have to say."

"I will then proceed," said Mr. Ball, "to explain the amount of the late Mr. Franklin's property, and the securities in which he had invested it. My friend, Mr. Vowells, will correct me if I make any mistake, I am sure."

Here he again looked at Mr. Vowells, and that gentleman nodded his head, and to my surprise tapped his goggle eye with the end of his spectacles, which he held in his hand.

I am ashamed to say that this act on the part of the family solicitor filled me with such con-

sternation, that I paid very little attention to what followed. When I got more accustomed to Mr. Vowells, I bore those tappings of his glass eye with more composure, and soon found out that he only treated himself to this diversion when he meant to be very emphatic. Once when he had visited us in the summer, I saw a fly light on his glass eye and run across it without his moving a muscle, though the first time I saw him tapping his goggle eye, it almost made my real eyes water.

“I am glad to inform you, my dear Mrs. Franklin, that, owing, in great measure, to excellent investments which our friend, Mr. Vowells, found for your late husband, and perhaps I might add, by my own exertions, the money which Mr. Franklin inherited from his father, and the sums which he had saved out of his salary by a life of honourable probity, have been so well placed, that there is little fear but that you and my young friend Frank here will be able to continue to live in the same position as you have hitherto done. This, I am sure, you will feel to be a great comfort. If not now, a little later on; for though nothing, as I well know—” here he paused, as if lost in memory of his deceased wife—“can at all alleviate the agony of such a bereavement, still,

poverty, or want of means, is a great aggravation to domestic sorrow, and so, I trust, it will be a consolation to you, my dear Mrs. Franklin, to feel that you and Frank will be handsomely provided for."

"As yet it is no consolation at all," sobbed my mother, whose grief nearly choked her utterance.

"Quite so! quite so!" exclaimed Mr. Ball, tenderly. "I was obliged to tread on that sacred spot in your heart, and I am not surprised to find you at present quite indifferent either to good or bad news, as to your worldly prospects."

For a little while we all sat looking at one another—my mother swallowing down her tears; I rather angry with Mr. Ball and his confederate for giving her all this trouble, but not exactly seeing how it could be avoided; Mr. Ball sitting like all the cardinal virtues; and Mr. Vowells trying to smooth down one of his rebellious feathers, which would stand up on the very top of his head.

At last my mother in broken accents said to Mr. Ball:

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Much, very much," said Mr. Ball, "or, rather, if I might suggest such a course, our mutual friend, Mr. Vowells, will read you a memorandum

of the securities in which the fifty thousand pounds which represent the inheritance and accumulations of the late Mr. Franklin have been invested, so as to pay at least seven per cent. Is it your wish, dear Mrs. Franklin, that Mr. Vowells should read that list, or would you prefer it, now that the ice has been broken, and we have told you the amount, that we should leave the details till another opportunity?"

"I think we will hear them now," said my mother, including, as you observe, me in her "we."

"Mr. Vowells," said Mr. Ball, "will you have the goodness to read the memorandum?"

Thus exhorted, Mr. Vowells first tapped his glass eye with the butt end of his spectacles, as if to call attention by the sharp, thin sound; next he put his spectacles on, and, at last, he began to read. I suppose all this tapping and spectacling took half a minute, but to me, and, I am sure, to my mother, it seemed an age.

"This," said Mr. Vowells, clearing his throat, "purports to be a list of securities, standing in the sole name of John Ball, Esquire, Contractor, of St. Helen's Place, Great St. Helen's, Bishopsgate Within, in the City of London, and No. —, Wimpole Street, in the Parish of St. Marylebone, Middlesex, as sole executor and trustee, under

the will of Frank Franklin, Esquire, deceased, late of her Majesty's Treasury, and of No. —, Wimpole Street, in the aforesaid parish and county.

"Imprimis :

"£10,000 in the Falacre Coal and Coke Company, all paid up, and paying seven per cent."

"Of this investment," said Mr. Ball, interrupting Mr. Vowells, "I may be permitted to remark that it represents the proceeds of the same amount of bank stock, in which a portion of the property of Mr. Franklin's father was invested. But, pray proceed, Mr. Vowells."

"Secondly, £10,000 in the Barbarossa Gold Mining Company, which pays on an average ten per cent., but say only seven."

Here again Mr. Ball intervened in his softest and silkiest voice, "This sum represents the proceeds of the policies of life insurance with accruing bonuses on the life of Mr. Franklin's father, and hitherto, that is to say until the last year or so, invested in consols. It seemed idle, nay, sinful, to leave such an available sum lying at such trifling interest, and so the late Mr. Franklin, acting under the advice of Mr. Vowells, bought these Barbarossa shares, which I consider quite the best investment in the mining market, and

which, as you will not have failed to observe, our friend, Mr. Vowells, only estimates to produce seven per cent. It is, of course, as well not to be too sanguine."

"Quite so! quite so!" said Mr. Vowells again, tapping his eye, for he had taken off his spectacles.

"But for my part," went on Mr. Ball, "I shall be much disappointed if our shares—for I, too, hold some—do not produce ten per cent. on the average."

"I will not dispute with you, Mr. Ball," said Mr. Vowells; "I hope it may be ten per cent., but we lawyers, you know, are a suspicious race, and it is always well to be on the safe side."

"Quite so! quite so!" said Mr. Ball, and then this amicable altercation ceased.

"The third investment," said Mr. Vowells, adjusting his spectacles, though of what use they could have been to his glass eye I can't conceive—"the third investment is one which I could safely recommend to any client, and, indeed, the late Mr. Franklin was most fortunate in having a friend like Mr. Ball to part with them to him. They are," and here he hemmed and hawed as though he were about to proclaim a new king at the least—"they are £15,000 in the Real del

Demonio Silver Mine; average rate of interest, ten per cent."

Here Mr. Ball again broke in, and, in fact, it seemed absolutely necessary that this worthy pair should run in couples throughout this interview.

"My dear Mrs. Franklin, I am now about to put you into possession of a family secret of which I am sure you were hitherto unaware. These fifteen thousand pounds were the proceeds of a castle and estate in Upper Austria, which your husband won in the Vienna Lottery. I advised him to take the ticket as a speculator, never expecting it to prove such a prize, but it did, and that number turned up as winning the first prize. Of course he sold the castle and estate, and bought of me—though I would only have parted with them to such a friend—the shares in the 'Del Demonio' Silver Mine. Thus," he added, sententiously, "converting the precarious profit of a speculative venture into the certainty of a secure investment. The direction of the mine in Mexico is in the hands of a board of native Mexicans, but there are in that favoured land gentlemen of as high honour and solid income as are to be found in any region of the globe."

Then descending from his flight into the ether of speculative probity, he went on—

"Let me see, Mr. Vowells, is there not one other investment which our lamented friend made?"

"There is," said Mr. Vowells, and then he read on out of his memorandum, "£5000 worth of shares in the Greenland Graphite Company, estimated interest, twenty per cent."

"Of this," said Mr. Ball, "all that can be said is that if nothing comes of it, you and my young friend here will be amply provided for out of the above-named investments. But if it does succeed and pay the interest expected by the least sanguine dealers in the metal market, it will prove more profitable than all the others. You are both aware, of course, that the Cumberland black lead ores are on the eve of extinction if they are not actually worked out. Greenland is the only country in which graphite, of a far purer and finer quality even than our Cumberland mines, exists in inexhaustible quantities. Some friends of mine have obtained this concession from the Danish Government, and I was thus able, only in the month of September last, to get Mr. Franklin's name put down for some of these shares. The sum of £5000 represents these shares fully paid up. The first call only has been paid as yet, but by a transfer of a balance remaining in consols out of the accumulations of Mr. Frank-

lin's father, and a policy of insurance for £4000 effected on his own life, I shall be in funds to meet the remaining calls. Is not that your opinion, Mr. Vowells?"

"Quite so! quite so!" said Mr. Vowells; "and now I think I have got to the end of this memorandum."

"We have thought it best, as I said before, my dear Mrs. Franklin," said Mr. Ball, "to inform you of these interesting facts, and it now only remains to congratulate you on the honourable and lucrative independence which my lamented friend, aided by Mr. Vowells and myself, has bequeathed to you and his son."

All this time my mother had remained in what I can only call a comatose state. She heard what was going on, and paid as much attention to what the one-eyed Vowells was reading and uttering, or to Mr. Ball's explanations, as a dormouse in her nest, or a bear in his lair to the whistling of the wintry wind.

When the flow of words was over, she raised her head and said,

"Have you anything more to tell me?" To which Mr. Ball replied Socratically by another question.

"Have you any question which you would like to ask?"

"Only this," faltered out my mother—"how much shall I and this poor boy have to live on?"

At any other time I should, with my keen sense of the ludicrous, have been amused at the indignation with which that virtuous pair repelled all insinuation of poverty.

"To live on!" exclaimed Mr. Ball, actually raising his voice just a trifle—"to live on! Dear Mrs. Franklin! do just carry the figures in your head."

"But I can't, and haven't carried them in my head. All that Mr. Vowells said was, I am ashamed to say, lost upon me."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Vowells, tapping his glass eye, for he had again taken off his spectacles—"dear me! how distressing!"

"Allow me, just allow me," said Mr. Ball, turning to my mother, "to put the figures to you shortly. The property of my lamented friend amounted to forty-five thousand pounds—say £45,000. That at three per cent. would produce an income of £1350 a year. But at seven per cent., which is the lowest amount which we reckon these securities will produce, £45,000 will secure you an income of £3150 per annum, free of all care and trouble. Am I right in those figures, Mr. Vowells?"

"Certainly, Mr. Ball," said the man of law.

"Observe, too," said Mr. Ball, in a very oily way, "that it was friendship alone for your lamented husband which induced me to take so much interest in his affairs. For no one else would I have incurred the responsibility of this executor and trusteeship. Young men will be young men, and who knows whether Frank, whom we all love so much, may not have a crop of wild oats to sow—"

"He shall not and must not have them," said my mother, resenting the imputation.

"But he may," reiterated Mr. Ball; "and in that case on what a sea of vexation should I not have embarked."

Then, after a pause, rising as it were to a sense of the dignity of his position, he went on,

"But, my dear madam, it has been well said that 'he that hateth suretyship is sure,' but if we were all to evade responsibilities, and if the wishes of a departed friend were not binding on us after his decease, what would become of friendship and affection? Earth would be a wilderness and every outlook of existence a barren waste. Believe me," he said, as he rose to take leave—"believe me, I am not so selfish as to break, in the least tittle, the word which I pledged to

Frank's father when he besought me to become an executor and trustee to his will."

Here Mr. Vowells, who had risen at the same moment, said, with as much emphasis as when he tapped his glass eye,

"Mr. Ball, we shall be late for our appointment in the City," and thus adjured, Mr. Ball brought his protestations to an end and departed, assuring my mother that he would take the necessary steps to prove my poor father's will.

"For the rest," he said, "it will be a pleasing duty to me to pay your dividends regularly for you into your bankers whenever they accrue, and you may rely on it, that in this and in everything else, you and Frank will find me your true friend as well as your trustee."





CHAPTER IV.

MR. FIVEOAKS COMES INTO THE STORY.

It was not for some time after, that my mother and I compared notes on Mr. Ball and Mr. Vowells; and so, for the present, I will say nothing of them in their business capacity. As was natural, this trusteeship threw the two households nearer together; but it was of Mary Ball that we saw most; of her father we saw little; we were not going out or receiving company and he was, as usual, away all day. But Mary was often with us those holidays. She was now fifteen or thereabouts, and decidedly old for her age.

But, though we saw little of Mr. Ball, it was not long after that visit that my mother had another business visit, and that was from her own

trustee—a lawyer, to whom her father, when he died, had left the executorship of his will.

His had been very simple duties. All he had to do was to pay to her, twice a-year, the interest of five thousand pounds, in the three and a half per cents.; and it so happened that I had never seen him; for he was an old man, who lived at Reading, where he had made an independence, and retired from business. Even my mother he very seldom saw, as all his business for her could be and was done by letter.

You must have seen, I think, that I had not been very favourably impressed by Mr. Vowells. Besides his glass eye, and everlasting tapping of it, he seemed always ready to swear to anything which Mr. Ball said. There was, therefore, a sameness and monotony about him, which was boring and provoking. Nor did his manner inspire confidence, which a solicitor should always do, or aim at doing.

But Mr. Fiveoaks was quite another sort of man. Why Fiveoaks? you ask absurdly—as if either he or I could help his name. A man, indeed, has been known to threaten an action against his godfathers and godmothers for giving him an ugly Christian name; but who ever heard of a man laying the blame of his surname on any

one. Besides, if he dislikes it, he may change it by the Queen's licence, when Garter will make him pay handsomely for the privilege; or by deed filed in Chancery, which will cost him as many shillings as Garter will charge him pounds; or by simple advertisement in the Bug-Howard fashion, which will cost him ten shillings in the agony column of the *Times*. In any of these ways, he may shake off his surname, but a Christian name is indelible. It sticks to a man through life, and there is no help for it if his sponsors wished him to be called "Darius," and a deaf curate has christened and registered him "Dryus."

And, to return to Fiveoaks, what right have any of you to laugh at his name, any more than if it were "Sevenoaks," which, the wise now tell us, should be "Sennocks?"

But whatever he was by name, Mr. Fiveoaks was what every one, man or woman, would have called "a dear old man." He was one of the old school: dressed always in black, wore breeches and gaiters, and a white neckcloth, and, in fact, was much more like a bishop without his lawn sleeves, than all the bishops now on the bench put together.

Then he had such flowing white hair, and plenty of it, too, and there was gravity, not sad;

but cheerful, in his face, and such honesty in his speech.

My mother had written to him to come and see her before she knew what magnificent prospects, as seen through Mr. Balls' rosy medium and Mr. Vowells' glass eye, existed for myself and her, and she felt naturally anxious to ask advice of a man who had been a friend of the old rector, her father.

They say what is natural never changes; you may repress it, trample on it, almost smother it for thirty years, and when you think it dead just take off the pressure, and you find the thing or the feeling as alive as ever it was.

So it had been with my mother and her love of the country. With her it was not love alone, it was a passion. She had all the love and all the burning desire to be in the country and live in it which she had felt before she knew my father, and it only shows how strong her love for him had been, that she had lived all those years happily with him a town life, and learned, in spite of all her longings, to do without the country.

I have no doubt, therefore, that the first root of comfort that showed itself out of the wasted ground of her heart after my father's death, was

the feeling of a desire to change the scene and retire into the country. For me, as for him, she would have lived in a garret in Soho—nay, in Seven Dials itself—but then he was gone, and as I was soon in the course of things to leave school and go to Oxford, where, then, could she live so happily, if we were to be parted, as in her own old Berkshire, only not near that waterside rectory, not in that old girlish home, the contrast would have been too painful for her, but somewhere out of town, which must always remind her of him she had lost, and so was doubly hateful to her; somewhere among the heaths and fir-trees, and away from running water.

These thoughts were in her mind besides business when she wrote for Mr. Fiveoaks, and Mr. Fiveoaks came at her bidding to see us in Wimpole Street.

I remember him now as he sat in the arm-chair by the fireside rubbing his knees with his poor thin hands, and every now and then looking at my mother with a face full of interest and feeling.

After the first sad meeting was over, he said—

“Much the same face, Mrs. Franklin, though wasted with sorrow; I should have known you anywhere. What a day that was when we heard

you were to leave the rectory and live in London. All the old men and women said, 'Leave the country and live in London! and she so fond of heath and wild flowers! Never!' But like many 'nevers,' they turn into 'sures' and 'always.' Deny a thing and protest against it, and it's sure to come to pass."

"It was sad to part from the country and all my old friends," said my mother, "but, Mr. Five-oaks, that is now an old story, and now a new story, and to me a sadder, has come to pass. But what should you say if, after all, in a little while, I went back to dear old Berkshire?"

"What should I say?—why, that dear old Berkshire would be very glad to have you back again. Anywhere, even in Reading—though they do say one of those new-fangled things called railways is coming to Reading. But no," he added, with a sigh, "you'll never come to live in Reading. Why change one town for another? No; you must live somewhere away from the water, and away from the smoke, out in the Forest, or Bagshot way, where the trees are so green and the wild flowers and the heath so sweet and balmy."

"How delightful!" said my mother, leaning back in her chair and shutting her eyes, as though she were already away in the sum-

mer wandering through Swinley or Windsor Forest.

Then coming to herself, she said—

“But it was not that I wanted to tell you, or not all that; I certainly did wish to take your advice about taking my money out of the funds, the only securities I understand, and buying a house and garden and ground in the country, and letting this house or selling the lease, and going into the country to live. Frank goes to Oxford next summer—but that was not all. I wished to tell you how rich we were likely to be if I am to believe Mr. Ball and Mr. Vowells.”

“And pray, who are Mr. Ball and Mr. Vowells?” asked Mr. Fiveoaks, in a very innocent way.

“Oh,” said my mother, “don’t you know? I thought all lawyers knew one another, and so you must know Mr. Vowells; and as for Mr. Ball, he’s a capitalist and a contractor—isn’t it that, Frank, he is called in your father’s will?”

“Yes, mother, contractor.”

“Well,” said Mr. Fiveoaks, shortly and rather bluntly, “capitalist and contractor may mean the same thing, and perhaps they do in this case, but I’ve known contractors that were anything but capitalists.”

“Oh, but he is a capitalist,” I retorted, “for

my father told me so, and, what's more, I went to see him at his office in Great St. Helen's."

"Well," said Mr. Fiveoaks, "and what did Mr. Ball and Mr. Vowells say to make you think you would be very rich?"

Then my mother told him the whole story, I must say assisted a good deal by me, for, as I have told you, she was in a sort of dream during the greater part of that interview, and only really remembered the summing up at the end, in which Mr. Ball had shown her how forty-five thousand pounds at seven per cent. would bring in more than twice as much income as the same sum at three.

But while we were telling the story of these investments, you should have seen the faces that Mr. Fiveoaks made: they were quite as remarkable as Mr. Vowells' tapping or his goggle glass eye.

When our story had come to an end, Mr. Fiveoaks behaved very rudely, for he only drew a long breath and then gave a loud whistle. He soon recovered himself, however, and said,

"I must beg your pardon, Mrs. Franklin, for being so rude, but I really never heard such a wonderful story in all my life."

"It sounds like the 'Arabian Nights,'" I said.

"You see we do not deal in coals and iron, but with precious metals, gold and silver."

"I should say," said Mr. Fiveoaks, "that it sounds more like a whale than anything else. I never heard of such a series of investments in my life. What can have possessed Mr. Franklin to take his good money out of bank stocks and consols, and invest it in Mexican gold and silver mines?"

"Ah, but you see," said my mother, "Mr. Ball was such a friend of his, and he and Mr. Vowells gave him such good advice. It was an opportunity not to be had every day. That's why we are so lucky."

"And under the will," said Mr. Fiveoaks, half musingly to himself—"under the will Mr. Ball is sole executor and trustee?"

"Yes," said my mother, "there is no doubt of that, for Mr. Vowells drew the will."

"I have no doubt he did," said Mr. Fiveoaks, sadly, "I've no doubt of it. Well! well! we must hope for the best; but it is a fearful responsibility to put into the hands even of a friend and a capitalist, much less a contractor. At any rate, your £5000 is safe in the reduced three-and-a-half per cent., and there it shall stay as long as I, John Fiveoaks, am alive, unless you can per-

suade me to invest it in houses or land, that is to say, in real property in England. No! no! none of your ten and seven per cents. for me, least of all when they are to come from Mexican mines managed by native gentlemen of the highest probity."

I do not know that this attack of Mr. Fiveoaks on my father's investments at all prepossessed us in his favour. As for me, the gold and silver had entered into my soul, and knowing nothing of the world and its ways, I looked on Mr. Ball, and even on the sinister Vowells, as good genii who were to make our fortune.

As for my mother, she respected Mr. Fiveoaks, but she thought him over-prudent, and this opinion was confirmed when on looking over her banker's book some little time after she saw two entries of half-yearly dividends paid by the Barbarossa and Del Demonio mines, which together amounted to more than £1500.

"See here, Frank," she said; "this proves the truth of what Mr. Ball said. Mr. Fiveoaks was very wrong to throw any doubt on the prudence of such investments, and, now I remember it, your father used often to say that he was all very well in his way, an excellent, old-fashioned country practitioner, but quite unfit for London

business. He used to say he would as soon go to a parish doctor to set his leg as to a country lawyer to make his will or settle his affairs."

This conversation was just before I went back to Westminster for my last half, and when my father had been dead two months.

I dare say you will say, some of you, it was very soon to think of business after such a loss; and so it was, but will you just allow me to ask what I and my mother were to do, left as we were without any near relations, with no very intimate friends, and in utter ignorance of my father's affairs? Had he taken my mother more into his confidence, it would have been better both for him and for us. But he was so overworked doing the national accounts from day to day, that at home he seemed to have no time or heart for his own, and as Mr. Ball was the only man whose opinion he respected, it was but natural that he should leave everything to him, especially as he had found him such very desirable investments.

The reader will not have failed to remark that the best investment of all, that Greenland Graphite scheme, was evidently the one about which I had overheard my poor father and Mr. Ball talking on that memorable day when we went to Great St. Helen's. But as for our turn-

ing our attention to business so soon, it was not from any want of affection towards my father that my mother entered into his affairs, but because they were forced on us, and we could not avoid them. I say "we" because to the best of my belief my mother never had an interview on business with Mr. Ball or Mr. Fiveoaks after my father's death at which I was not present.

For the rest, the business was some relief to the monotony of our grief, but in all other respects our house was the house of mourning for months after my father's death. No child and no wife could have felt a father's and husband's loss more deeply than we did.

How sorry I was to go back to Westminster and leave my mother alone, but that too was inevitable and could not be helped. There are times in life when one has to lay one's feelings by for a while, not to wither or be forgotten, but to come forth with fresh force as soon as the occasion which has diverted them for a season has passed away.

During that half I came home as usual on Saturdays, and many and many a time I got leave up town between schools on other days in the week so that I might run up to Wimpole Street and try at least to console my darling mother.

She now began to take more and more to Mary Ball, and over and over again when I went up to luncheon and asked the faithful Thomas whether any one was with his mistress, he would say, "No one but Miss Ball, Master Frank; she comes a'most every day."

Nor was Mary less communicative. "Miss Mary has been here again, Master Frank, and I do think it would be very well if you were to marry her or she were to marry you, and then all Mr. Ball's money would be added to what your poor papa has left."

To which I merely said, "Get along, Mary, with your marriages. Ten years hence it will be plenty of time to think of looking out for a wife."





CHAPTER V.

SOMETHING ABOUT MR. CHRYSOSTOM.

"Not a friend in the world," some of you will have thought ; "pray where was your man friend, Mr. Chrysostom, of whom we expected such great things ?"

Yes! you are quite right—where was Mr. Chrysostom, who might have been such a comfort to us in every way? But before I answer it, let me ask you another. Did you ever have a consumptive friend? If you had, you will have known that they are always out of England just at the very time they are most wanted. And that was Mr. Chrysostom's case, who had been sent abroad by his doctor almost as soon as ever that delightful visit at Hurstmonceaux was over, that he might escape the coming winter.

As I write this, I have been thinking of all the

places to which Mr. Chrysostom had at one time or other been sent by his medical advisers, and forced to fly from England for his very life. If they say that three removes, or two as some say, are as bad as a fire, what in mere money must his removes, bag and baggage, with Susannah and the youngsters, have cost him? Once he was sent to the West Indies, where he stayed some time and came in for a hurricane which blew his house down and scattered his effects. Once he went to Madeira, once to Pau, once to Bordeaux, and once to Sicily. Over and over again he was sent to mild places in England, as Clifton, and Falmouth, and Ventnor. Always returning to England and London as soon as he gained a little strength, for such was the vigour and vivacity of the man that he pined and moped in exile, and lived only in the society of his friends and equals, and so he gradually got weaker and weaker, but the end was not at this part of my story. When my father died, he was in Sicily, and it was not till a fortnight or more had passed that his letter of condolence to my mother and myself came limping in after the rest. But when they came they were worth more than all the rest, better far than the Archdeacon's, who had taken the trouble to write me one.

I have Mr. Chrysostom's letter still, and he said, what many others have said, that the ways of God are inscrutable, and past finding out. No one could say why we lived or why we died, but we might rest assured that our greatest misfortunes were in many cases, perhaps in all, mercies under a mask. Some who were taken from happiness, as it seemed, were really removed from misery to come. No one could tell when a man had really ended the purpose for which he was born. But even the youngest might show, by the patience with which he bore a great trial, that God had not sent him into the world in vain.

"But for you, dear Frank," he ended, "your duty is plain. You ought to make up, by all means in your power, to your mother for your father's loss. Let her feel that in you he lives again, and this you can do best by following in your vocation that unflinching industry with which he fulfilled his duties in the public service. One thing you have in your favour—you are young and healthy, not hunted from pillar to post, and over sea and land, as I am, by a fell disease. 'Health,' as the Greeks say, 'is the best and fairest of God's gifts;' and that you may ever enjoy what is denied to him, is the prayer of your affectionate friend, JOHN CHRYSOSTOM."

Was not that a nice letter? Yes! there it lies, yellow and worn, from having been carried about with me for weeks and weeks, but still as plain and as clear in its strong, hearty handwriting as the day in which it was first written.

You see, therefore, why it was, and how it was, that Mr. Chrysostom could not console me in person. Nor, in fact, was it until the end of May that he came back to England. Meantime, as I have told you, I had gone back to Westminster, where I found, in Irwin's constant love and friendship, fresh condolence for my sorrows. He had long lost both father and mother, and was, as he expressed it, "a ready-made orphan;" and sometimes he used to say, "That's why I love you so much, because I have nothing else to love. Who can tell if I should love you at all if I had father and mother, and brothers and sisters of my own? As for relations, I have only one aunt and one uncle, with whom I stay by turns. They are my guardians, and both very kind to me, but they are always quarrelling about me. One is a Protestant and the other a Catholic, and between them I am such a bone of contention, and have been for so many years, that I feel as if all the meat were gnawed off me, and I was not worth having."

Then, when I said it was a very poor compli-

ment to love some one because you had no one else to love, he used to reply, "In this wicked world you must take things as you find them, and if you get only a little love, or love that some one else might have had if they had existed, I advise you to take it, for, you may depend on it, it is so very scarce, you may end by having none at all."

And then he would break out, "What a storyteller I am! I wouldn't be without you for anything, and you are dearer to me than any one in the world whom I have not known, for I have known you, and not known father or mother."

"But what of that uncle and aunt," I asked, "away in Ireland?"

"Poor, dear creatures, I would love them if I could, but they won't let me," said Irwin. "They fight for me, and call that love; but I don't call that love, for it is only jealousy."

"But there is one good thing about them," he used to say, "they take great care both of my property and their own, and each says, so far as his or hers is concerned, it shall surely come to me, if I am good. If I am bad, one says it shall all go to missions to the heathen and the conversion of the Jews—that's my old uncle, the Protestant; and the other, my maiden aunt, swears

it shall all go to the Propaganda if I don't behave; but neither of them will ever define what their meaning of goodness or of behaving is, except that I am never to do what the other desires. And so, between the two, I have rather a weary time of it, when I am in Ireland, spending half my time with one and half with the other. And, do you know, it always comes to the same thing. I would sooner far be here at school with you than at home with them."

You see, therefore, what bosom friends we were, and how Irwin used to tease me about putting up with all the love he could give me, because he really had no one else in the world on whom to bestow it.

I remember that we both worked harder at our German and classics than half than we had ever done before. We were now fair German scholars, and in Latin and Greek we were at the head of the sixth—Irwin head town boy, and I second.

As for algebra and mathematics, we hated them with an irrational, but for all that a deadly hatred. And as for Euclid, he was an abomination to both of us. Would we not have subscribed most heartily to the society which now exists for abolishing him! But, alas! the school knew nothing of its greatest boys, just as the world knows nothing

of its greatest men. We were before our age, the martyrs of this reaction against Euclid which was to follow in our footsteps. I suppress the fact, of course, that those who now-a-days desire to abolish Euclid propose to substitute some algebraical solution of his problems and theorems which would have been doubly distasteful to us; but let that pass—the mere idea of abolishing a geometrician who had caused us such extreme suffering would have been most refreshing to our young minds.

But, to return, when it came to be settled to which of the colleges at Oxford we were to go—I say “we,” for Irwin declared that he would only go to the one I chose; and for once both his aunt and his uncle agreed to let him have his way; not at all, he said, because they loved Oxford, but because the uncle wanted him to go to Trinity College, Dublin, and the aunt, if she could have had her way, to some popish seminary.

“And so,” said Irwin, one day early in May, “as they can’t either of them have their own way, for a wonder, they have for once in their lives allowed me to have mine, and I am to go to Oxford. Hurrah!”

Then, soon afterwards, he said,

"Why don't you decide on a college, and let us go up, and be as happy as we can. You know we shall never be happier than we are now. There are such trials and vexations in life."

"Not to speak of aunts and uncles," I said; "but be easy now, as your countrymen say, and as soon as Mr. Chrysostom comes back we will see about it."

It was very fortunate for both of us that there were others who could see about it better than ourselves; for, happening to mention to Dr. Williamson that we both wished to matriculate at some college in Oxford, so that we might reside in the October Term.

"Then," said that meekest of men, "Then, Franklin, I am afraid you will both be disappointed; such things are possible at Cambridge, my university," he said, with that grand air which Trinity sometimes gives itself; "but at Oxford they are impossible."

"Then, sir," I said, "we all know that headmasters can do all things. Pray make this possible at Oxford—for to Cambridge we will not go. We do not wish to beat them all. We are *such* mathematicians."

Even the mild Williamson laughed at this

thought for a moment, and then the kindest of men said,

"I only see one thing for it. Dr. Gaisford is fond of Greek, and you and Irwin are my model scholars. Perhaps, if I sent him some of your exercises which have been sent up for good, and a note of recommendation, he might give you rooms, and matriculate you at once."

The offer was too good to be refused. So without waiting for Mr. Chrysostom's return, I ran up between school to Wimpole Street, to my mother and got her leave.

Then Dr. Williamson sought out the exercises and sent them to the Dean of Christ Church.

For a week we awaited the answer of that awful potentate with fear and trembling; but at the end of that time came a letter from the Dean to "Dear Dr. Williamson," saying that he would matriculate the "young men," and give them rooms in October, but they must come up, and pass a much severer examination than the ordinary matriculation.

"Those are his terms," said Dr. Williamson, as he showed us the letter. "You will have to fulfil them to the letter, for the Dean's laws are like those of the Medes and Persians."

"We can but try," I said.

"And I am as sure we shan't fail," said Irwin.

"For the credit of the school, I trust you will succeed," said Dr. Williamson; and so it was settled that we should go up to Oxford, and take our chance in the course of the next week.





CHAPTER VI.

HOW WE WERE MATRICULATED.

So we went up to be matriculated—Irwin and I. Let me see, it was on the 15th of May, 183—. You all know what May weather is, the worst in the year, I should say, with its bitter east winds and night frosts. But, at that age, we cared little for such things, though even we thought it very odd that the poets should have so praised May for its warmth and flowers; for a greater impostor in those matters than an English May cannot be conceived. Instead of a fair youth, lightly clad, and scattering flowers out of the folds of his kirtle, he should be represented as an old man, wrapped in furs, and mowing down buds, and bursting leaves with a bitter scythe. But, as boys, we consoled ourselves with reflecting, that

the May of the poets was thirteen days longer in coming than our first of May, and so had time to leave some of his icicles behind him on the way, like that lagging Lent in Poggio's story, which was so long in coming over the Apennines that he left four out of his six weeks behind him. Yet, even after making every allowance, the weather ought to be mild on the 15th of the month, and yet it was not in the year when we went up to matriculate.

We went by the coach. In that year railways were only about to come, and some of them in construction, but none were actually open, so we got on the coach one fine but very cold morning, at nine o'clock, and then we had seven hours' drive before us to Oxford. Seven hours! think of that, you that complain of three hours, or even of two and a half by rail to the same city. You do not of course know that there were two ways then to Oxford: the "high" road, as it was called, that went by Wycombe and Stokenchurch Hill, certainly the coldest and bleakest ascent in England, and the "low" road which went by Uxbridge and Nettlebed. One was a little shorter than the other, but then the road was worse, so that the journey took seven or eight hours, and when snow fell, as it did in

my time at Oxford, two coaches were caught in it near Thame, and the passengers had to remain in a roadside inn for two days. Think of those things again, ye Sybarites of the rail, who grumble if you cannot get foot-warmers in your first-class carriages.

But I must get you off on the "Age," driven by Tollitt, then one of the best whips on the Oxford Road.

We drove from Westminster in two cabs, just then coming in, and I must tell you that in the very first cabs the driver sat alongside you inside the vehicle, and that was why we went in two cabs, which sounds like the elephant that came over in two ships, but so it was. The first cabs were open, like the cabriolets which some dandies still drive, like the phantoms of a past age, and as the driver sat cheek by jowl with you there was only room for one passenger, and so Irwin and I had two cabs, and hard work Dick had to find them, running all the way to Old Palace Yard to get them.

While I am about it I may as well tell you that later on, when the public had had enough of sitting side by side with a cabman, who, however respectable and virtuous, is sometimes redolent of odours which do not recall Araby the

Blest, a new cab was introduced, in which the driver sat in a seat outside the body of the vehicle, thus leaving room for two in the body itself, and this went on for some time, till Hansom, or Handsome, or whatever his real name was, invented our "Hansoms," a pattern which for open cabs has kept the streets against all comers ever since. As for street cabs there were several fashions of them, till they took their present shape, the most unprofitable one for the owners being one like a slice of an omnibus, in which two passengers sat facing one another; these were called "Bishops," but like that venerable body in the Scotch church they came to a speedy end, not on account of the hatred of the public to their Episcopal title, but because some of the less principled of the fares were in the habit of letting themselves out at the door behind and running off from the driver, who sat helpless on the box, quite innocent of the fact that he was driving an empty vehicle, and had been bilked by his fare.

Well, Irwin and I raced in our respective cabs to the White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly, and then we got on the seat behind the driver, Irwin on the outside with his feet dangling over, and I next him on the inside. Beside me was a father,

a country rector, who was taking his son up to matriculate.

If any of you ask why neither of us took the box-seat, let me tell you that the box-seat on the "Age" was always sure to have been booked for days. Even our seats behind had been taken, and booked, and part paid for by Dick two days before, and as for the box-seat I dare say it had been gone for a week. And here, as this book is written for instruction as well as amusement, pray observe that travelling even to Oxford was then a matter of calculation and forethought. A man did not then come down to breakfast and say, after he had comfortably finished it—

"Dear me, I ought to go down to vote at Oxford," and jump up and be off by the twelve o'clock train, arriving at 2.30; and still less could he go to York or Edinburgh on the spur of the moment, as he can now. No! he had even for the shortest journey to send and see if there were places on such and such a day; and he had to book them and pay a deposit, and then he might present himself with a quiet heart when the day came.

But to return to the box-seat, which to travellers by coach was as the liver wing of a fowl—only as everything has been changed since I was

a boy, I now remember there are some houses in which the fowls have no livers. Perhaps the cooks eat them themselves; perhaps there is a breed of fowls that have no livers, as there are, they say, men, and more especially women, who have no hearts.

But then, I say, in the age when children were not in the habit of teaching their grandmothers how to suck eggs, the box-seat was as the liver wing, a great bone of contention among coaching swells.

Thus you would hear in coffee-rooms of the old posting-houses, of which the country was full—like the Rose at Sittingbourne, or the Angel or the Mitre at Oxford, or the Hen and Chickens at Birmingham—a traveller, when he called for his bedroom candle and slippers, adjuring the waiter by all that was unholy to be sure to secure him the box-seat on the “Defiance,” or the “Telegraph,” or the “Tally Ho;” to which the waiter would almost invariably reply,

“Box-seat, sir! Booked a week ago, sir, by another gent!”

Whereupon the heavy swell aforesaid would with shame have to put up with the lowest room, and think himself glad if the “Tally Ho” would consent to take him at all at such short notice.

If you ask—but, really, if you ask so many questions, I shall never get to Oxford at all—if you ask why, then, had neither Irwin nor I bespoken the box-seat, the answer is, because then Damon and Pythias, and Pylades and Orestes must have been parted. One of us would have sat before, and the other behind, and we should have lost our sweet company all the way down. Besides, if you ask my real opinion, there never was such a bore in life as having the box-seat. First of all, you had the great privilege of having the coachman all to yourself, and enjoying his refined conversation. This more than counter-balanced in my eyes the free view of the country, and the contemplation of the way in which the team of four did their work. I do not deny that I have met in my numerous journeys by coach, very amusing coachmen, as Black Will, well known on the Bath and Oxford road, and even the driver of the infamous “Pig,” which ran between Rugby and Oxford, was an amusing fellow, and, what was odd, a Radical, which few coachmen were; but on the whole, their conversation was neither profitable nor amusing; it neither taught one the ingenious arts, nor did it scarcely ever fail to permit itself to be bearish. Then fancy the bore of being boxed up side by side

with a brute of a fellow with whom you had not one thought in common for seven hours ! What could you do after he had told you his opinion of "that 'ere 'oss on the near side," or "that gray mare, the off-leader," perpetually recurring, as the horses were changed at each stage, at which resting-places he would not unfrequently remark, with an emphasis like that of the verse in Genesis which says, "The gold of that land is *good*" — "The beer here is *verry good*?" I say, what could one do but order him a glass of beer at each stage, and relapse very quickly into conversing with yourself; or, in the modern phraseology, retiring into your own inner consciousness ?

But I do not deny that some fellows thought it fine fun ; and I suppose the box-seat must have been worth something, or travellers would not have been so bent on having it; but, all things considered, seeing that it cost you something to secure it, and that when you were asked to remember the coachman at the end of the journey, you paid him twice as much as any other passenger, besides giving him beer and cigars all the way down—I must say, all things considered, the game was not worth the candle.

now, before we start—for I see Tollitt

gathering up the reins and looking to his whip, after inspecting the way-bill, or list of passengers and parcels, as minutely as any French *douanier*—let me just point that the fares outside to Oxford were as high as first-class tickets on the railway, while inside seats were much dearer—only no one except women and babies, and very gouty old fellows, ever went inside—so that, what with fees to coachman and guard, and porters, and extra luggage, by the time an outside passenger got so far as Oxford, he had paid a deal more for his journey than he would now first-class.

And now we are at last really off; and very pleasant it was to feel that I was starting on a voyage of discovery, in the heyday of youth, into the world of real life, with the friend I loved best, sitting side by side, and bound on the same adventure.

So away we went along Piccadilly and Knightsbridge, where there were a kind of barracks, somewhere about Prince's Gate, for a troop of cavalry. I don't, of course, mean the Horse Guards' Barracks, which still exist, so don't interrupt me. I believe it was where a troop of Dutch William's dragoons had halted when he marched up to London, and that a shed had been erected for them, in which ever since they had been regularly

relieved at certain times. Farther on was the turnpike, a nuisance which lasted much longer than the cavalry shed, for it only vanished ten years ago, though most of you have already forgotten that it ever existed; and then came crooked Kensington, with its High Street, which has lately been made straight, but which for centuries caused innumerable accidents, and could boast of more deaths than many a broad and stately street; and so on, past Holland House, which looked pretty much as it does now, though it was not then so much encroached upon by the houses, which now threaten to smother it; and so on and on, by Turnham Green and down the Oxford Road, by Beaconsfield and Uxbridge, and Nettlebed, and Dorchester, of neither of which I dare say you have ever heard. I don't think the "Age" stopped to dine anywhere, though other coaches did; and another great bore it was, though I must say the food was usually very good—far better than what is usually to be had at railway stations—but even to eat the very best of dinners on a short journey is an absurdity for travellers who desire to get to their journey's end. This absurdity we escaped, and very hungry we both were when the "Age" trotted over Magdalen Bridge, and the glorious High Street burst on our view.

We alighted at the Angel, and, like idiots, ordered dinner in the coffee-room of that famous hostelry. I suppose we were so hungry that we lost our wits, for we ought to have known that our Westminster friends in "the House," as Christ Church is called by all Christ Church men, would have given us dinner. But what were we to do between half-past four and six? If we had been with Robinson Crusoe in his desert island—where, I may as well confess, I have often in life wished to be, with only one good friend—we should have done as he did, climbed up into a tree, and stuffed a quid of tobacco into our mouths to stay our hunger. Had we been mere boys we should, without fear of the consequences, have gone to Jubber's shop—Jubber was then the Birch of Oxford—and swallowed divers buns. But we did nothing of the kind; we walked up and down the High Street, and then we turned into the Corn Market, and then we passed up Broad Street, and so past the schools of St. Mary's and All Souls into the High Street again, and when we looked up at the clock it was still ten minutes to five.

"This will never do," said Irwin. "We want more excitement. Let us find our way to Christ Church, and see where the Dean lives. Perhaps

we shall find some Westminster fellows in the way."

Now, of course, you all know that it is but a step to Canterbury Gate, which we may call the back door of Christ Church, from St. Mary's. You have only to go down Oriel Lane, and there it is, nearly at the end, on the right. If we had asked, any passer-by would have put us in the way, but we were too proud to ask, so we wandered up and down for half an hour more, and then we somehow got into St. Aldate's, or St. Ald's, as it is called, and there we caught sight of "Tom," and we both cried out at once, "That's Christ Church at last," for we both knew it by a drawing in the Deanery, which we had seen when old Ireland asked us to dinner.

Then we passed under the archway, and feasted our eyes on Tom Quad, and the spire of the cathedral of old St. Frideswide rising over it, and we admired the noble proportions of the Hall outside, in which we ate afterwards so many dinners. As we were loitering and gazing about, we asked a man, who turned out to be the Under Porter, where the Dean lived, and he pointed out the Deanery, and, as we had our letter with us, we thought we would just call and leave it and

our cards. I remember we both had them written, and not printed, ready to leave.

So we took heart and rang the bell, and soon a severe-looking man came, "for all the world," as Irwin afterwards said, "like a dentist's servant—they are always so forbidding."

I suppose he saw we were in a great fright—and so we were, as well as famishing—for he said—

"Are you come up to matriculate?"

Just as though he had power to have matriculated us, then and there, on the spot. And, now I think of it again, he was, besides his resemblance to a dentist's servant, very like a doctor of divinity of the good old time.

Well, we boldly answered, "Yes," and he went on—

"Leave the cards, and your letter, if you have any, and be here at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, and you will be examined."

Then he shut the door in our faces, and put an end to the conversation.

I was rather what some people call "nettled" at all this.

"I wonder," I said, as we turned through the passage between Peckwater and Tom Quad, called "Killcanon," because of the furious blasts

which carry off in the long run—though it is a very long one—so many of that venerable body—“I wonder if the proverb holds good here, ‘Like master, like man!’ for if the Dean be like his servant, as well as his laws being like those of the Medes and Persians, his manners and customs must be as those of the ancient Scythians.”

“It’s no use talking of it—if they are, we shall soon know,” said Irwin. “What we have to do is to do as good a bit of Greek as we can; and if we satisfy the Dean in that respect, and get our rooms, we may snap our fingers at all the butlers and Scythians in the world. Why, what harm can they do us?”

“But he was so very rude,” I protested.

“Of course he was,” said Irwin; “but really that is more the Dean’s concern than ours. Besides, I dare say that old fellow has no end of people bothering him with cards and letters and questions about matriculation. Even a butler may have nerves, and it must be sorely trying to be rung up every moment from cleaning the plate by such a silly pair of boys as we are. But, don’t you see, this too has answered our purpose. I told you we wanted excitement, and now we have got it. Do you feel at all hungry now?”

“At all hungry is not the word,” I said, “for

I do feel hungry ; but I own I don't feel as famished as I did."

"That's because your attention has been diverted from your stomach to the Dean's butler. Come along, there's St. Mary's again. It is only a quarter to six. Let's wash our hands and have dinner."

So we went to our Angel and had our food, though, as we retraced our steps, we could not help remarking how empty the streets seemed to be of University men.

After dinner we wrote letters home—I to my mother, telling her my adventures, not forgetting the Dean's butler and the beauties of the place, being as enchanted with the one as disgusted with the other. As for Irwin, he wrote both to his aunt and his uncle; and I have no doubt what he wrote was very amusing, as every now and then he burst out into a little fit of laughing at the thought of the ludicrous scenes he was disclosing. I would have given a good deal to know whether he was laughing at me or the butler, but on that point he kept his own counsel, only saying, when he had done his letters—

"There, they will both be pleased."

After which we both folded our letters and sallied out to put them into the post.

I hope you know—all of you who have been born within the last thirty years—the importance of that word “folded.” I wonder how many men and women there are under forty who could fold a letter as letters were folded in the year 183—.

Suppose, now, you were in a country ruled over by a savage and capricious tyrant, who was, besides, of Malthusian tendencies, and wished to reduce his surplus population, and issued an edict, that every man and woman under forty who could not fold a letter neatly should lose his or her head—I wonder if your heads would feel tight or loose on your shoulders. Mind, it would be no use trying to learn how to do it in ten lessons, or any nonsense of that sort. Off all your unhappy heads would go, as sure as fate, for how to fold a letter was not to be learned in a hurry, and at schools all over the country little boys had floggings many, because, after they had written their holiday letter in their very best hand, when they tried to fold it, as the phrase was, “like a gentleman’s letter,” it was all dog’s eared and lapping over at the sides, and was more like a cook’s letter than anything else.

But, like the man who first brought a cat into a country overrun and eaten out of house and home by rats, when he said, “Have you no

cats?" you will ask, "Why did you not use envelopes?" For a very good reason, because there were none, and really I often think that the man who first hit upon the notion of envelopes for letters deserves a statue quite as much as Dr. Jenner, for he certainly stamped out our cook's letters while the doctor's vaccination has not altogether eradicated small-pox.

But just bear with me a little longer about letters. You see when we had folded them, and, with a pardonable vanity as possessing a lost art, I may say they *were* neatly folded, we took them to the post. Why not have stamped them and put them into the letter-box at the hotel? Now this question shows lamentable ignorance. I will forgive you the letter-box, which I dare say did exist, though then, as now, especially if I am abroad, I much prefer putting my letters into the post with my own hands. But what shall excuse your ignorance about "stamps?"

Know then, that in 183—, yes, far on into the thirties, there were no stamps, and what is worse, no penny postage. Letters were almost invariably unpaid till they reached their destination, and then they were charged enormous rates of postage. It was eightpence to Oxford alone, I remember, for a single letter, one sheet of letter-

paper; not foolscap mind, and so in proportion all over the country. When the postman came in the morning, he presented your letter and demanded payment, and if you would not or could not pay it he took it away again. Compare that with the present pre-payment and penny postage, and confess that in some respects at least this generation is more fortunate than those which went before it.

Well, we went out to find the post-office, then, as now, at the old Town Hall, and as we asked the waiter where it was, we soon found it, for Oxford, so far as the University is concerned, is not such a big place after all.

If we had been struck with the absence of gownsmen in the streets before dinner—a fact easily explained by their being, most of them, in those days either in chapel or in hall between five and six—we now saw numbers of them hurrying to and fro, and walking in knots of twos and threes up the High Street. There was not one of them, I can safely say, who did not wear his cap and gown, and so much was this the case that your presence without what the dons called “academicals,” attracted notice.

“Get out of the way as soon as you can,” cried one of a knot to us; “the Senior Proctor is

coming down the Corn Market. You'll be proctorized if you don't."

But though both of us had heard of "Proctors" as a formidable University authority, we had no notion of what he could do to us, and so we walked on till we met him full in the face, and fell right into his jaws.

In those days the two Proctors always wore the full dress master's gown, black silk, with full velvet sleeves of the same colour, and knee breeches and black silk stockings.

It was this University authority, attended by bulldogs, or policemen, and his pro-Proctors, masters of the University like himself, that we now stumbled on.

Nothing, I am bound to say, could equal his civility. Raising his cap, he said in a voice quite as soft as that of old Ball,

"Pray, gentlemen, are you members of this University?"

"No, we are not," said Irwin, who never wanted self-possession, and who uttered the right thing while I was thinking how to say it.

"Then I beg your pardon," said the Proctor, and passed on with his following.

"Won't you catch it!" said one of the next knot of gownsmen that we met; "you'll have to

go down all the way to St. John's to see Sharpe to-morrow. Hadn't you better take your places by the coach?"

But all this chaff was lost on Irwin and myself. We took our ease in the streets of the University of which we were possibly to become members on the morrow. It was a fine moonlight night, and it was a treat to us to be out, so up and down we paced the High Street admiring the beautiful buildings in her beams. In the course of our walk we met the Junior Proctor, who put the same question to us with the same answer and result, and at last, a little after midnight, we went back to our inn, and were soon sleeping as soundly as the young and the innocent. deserve to sleep.





CHAPTER VII.

HOW WE SAW THE DEAN.

NEXT morning we were called at nine, and took a stroll in the full freshness of that May morning, down the High Street. Then returning to breakfast, we swallowed it as the Jews may have swallowed their first passover, for we were afraid if we did not make haste we might be too late for our matriculation.

I need hardly say when we looked at the clock it was still five minutes to ten. "Well," I said to Irwin, "time does go slowly in Oxford."

"Yesterday," he replied oracularly, "we were hungering for our dinner, and to-day we are thirsting for our examination. I dare say if we ever come up to reside, we shall find it fly fast enough."

And he was quite right in this as in most things.

Well, the lazy minutes dragged along, and having killed them by all the means at our disposal, such as reading newspapers and staring out of the coffee-room window—pray observe that we did not smoke—we started at ten minutes to eleven, and at the Dean's door we stood as the clock in Tom tower struck the hour.

But it was amusing to see, as Irwin had predicted, that we did not stand alone. A whole host of young men, evidently bent on the same errand, stood round the door and quite up into "Killcanon," and, in fact, there were so many that the butler when he opened the door disappeared instantly, slamming the door in our faces, and when he came back, said that the Dean would have the examination in the Hall.

"There are too many of you gentlemen by half," was all that the butler said besides.

So away we all moved to the Hall and took our seats at the tables, looking like a mere handful in its noble proportions.

But before we could so much as look round us, that is to say, Irwin and I, the Dean's butler came scuttling in; it wasn't so much a run as a waddle, and called out—

"The Dean wants to see them two Westminster gents at the Deanery."

As there were no other "Westminster gents" up, for it was before Ascension Day, when the Westminster students are elected annually to Christ Church, Irwin and I at once knew what he meant, so we rose and followed the butler, whose waddle had now subsided into a stately strut.

"It is all over with us," I said to Irwin; "you see he won't even let us go into the examination. He has changed his mind after reading those exercises."

"We shall see," said Irwin.

The Deanery door was open, and in a moment we had entered, and were shown into the library, where we found Dr. Gaisford ready to receive us, in cap and gown.

He was a resolute but not at all forbidding-looking man, though, as he had to harden his face against generations of undergraduates, it was no wonder that his aspect was sometimes stern. It requires a good temper to stand a series of practical jokes, the chief point of which consists in regularly painting your door red or green two or three times a term. If it only happened once or twice in one's lifetime one might laugh at it, but

when it occurs eight or ten times a year for twenty years running, why the joke loses its fun, and the face is apt to grow stern.

"The Dean of Westminster and the Head Master of Westminster School," said Dr. Gaisford, "have both written to ask me to give you rooms in October term, and to matriculate you now, and they have both given you good characters, and sent me some fair exercises in Greek. I have sent for you to tell you what I could not do among those other gentlemen-candidates for admission to the House, that if you will do me this bit of Latin prose, and answer these few grammatical questions, which I have no doubt you will both do very well, I will not trouble you to go through the examination with the rest. But to do this you must stay here and write your exercises, so take these papers, and remember, I leave it to your honour not to help one another."

Before we could thank him for his kindness the rough old Dean had vanished, and it was characteristic of his caution that he turned the key on us as he went out, though, as the window was open, we might have got out into the garden if we chose.

"What a dear old fellow," was all we said to one another, and then we fell to work and

did the bit of English into Latin prose, after which we attacked the grammatical questions, which we had nearly done, when at one o'clock the key turned again in the door, and the Dean reappeared.

"It is now time to give up your papers," he said. "If you will call to-morrow morning my servant will tell you the hour at which you can be matriculated."

Now-a-days, I dare say, men go up and are examined and matriculated and go down all in one day. If they are, I don't see how they can be examined properly, and no wonder we hear of the standard being lowered, but whatever be the case now, it was not so in our time. The Dean took time to look over these examination papers, assisted by the tutors and lecturers.

When we left the Deanery we found, as we had expected, several of our Westminster friends waiting for us outside. They were anxious to hear about the old place, asked how we thought the annual election would go, and ended by dragging us off to luncheon, after which we were to go down on the river and then dine at the students' table in Hall.

I remember the rooms we went to were in Tom Quad, just on the left as you come through the

tower from St. Ald's. When we got inside we had time to admire the thickness of Wolsey's splendid masonry, and to measure it by the recess which the window made in the wall. We had soup and cold lamb and pastry and cheese for luncheon, to which we did ample justice, as the examination had made our appetites nearly as sharp as they had been the day before. To tell the truth, we had been too anxious to eat much breakfast.

When we had done we ran down through the gate into the long walk near Old Fell's Buildings, and just stopped to gaze at those glorious elms, then not torn as they are now by wind and tempest. We ran down by the side of Pactolus, which then had no wall along it, but revealed all its filth and the miserable backs of the houses which overhung it to all beholders. But what did it matter? Those were the days long before what is called the sanitary movement. Every one was allowed to poison his neighbour by cess-pools and drains, and if men died from fevers so caught, the Bills of Mortality put it down to some other cause. That was really the age of innocence, so far as infection and contagion were concerned.

Down we ran, never thinking of sanitary measures or movements, and all embarked in

skiffs at Hall's boat-house, whence we started for a cruise up the Cherwell. What fun it was turning the corner before Rat Island, beyond Christ Church meadow, and how beautiful the Long Walk and Magdalen Walks looked from the water. How often we were nearly upset by snags and overhanging branches, and how our companions, who knew the stream better, laughed at our blunders and mishaps. Then above Magdalen Walks we dragged our skiffs over a portage at a weir, and got upon the upper water of the Cherwell, which we threaded as far as Water Eaton. There we turned and found we could not get back in time for dinner in Hall. So our friends took us to the Roebuck, where we had our food, and afterwards went to wine in those rooms in Tom Quad.

An old Oxford wine-party used to be in this wise. Any one who wished to see his friends sent round the following laconic message: "Wine after Hall," and to wine the invited guests came. In those days claret was very little drunk in the University; respect for the Methuen Treaty, and the tastes of the dons and heads of houses, led undergraduates to prefer port and sherry, and so those wines—not always of the choicest vintage—were almost without exception the beverages

of every Oxford wine-party. Besides there was the usual dessert, figs, almonds, and raisins, nuts, oranges, and biscuits. On these, and over these, the wine-party went on with potations more or less deep according to the tastes and temper of those present. When the men had well drunk—and wine-parties sometimes lasted for hours—anchovy toast and coffee came, and when they had been devoured and drunk the wine-party was over.

These gatherings were sometimes very pleasant and amusing, and sometimes very dull and stupid. I do not remember much about this, our first one, except that we were about ten Westminsters together, and there was a deal of talk about the old school, and the fellows who were either still at it or had left. We were of an age to be pleased, and charmed at the way in which the Dean had opened the gates of "the House" to us.

"How very jolly it was," said Irwin, as we walked home to the Angel about half-past ten, without again encountering our friend, the Senior Proctor.

Next morning we were up early, and in far better spirits. As we now knew our way about we ran round Magdalen Walks and Christ Church

Meadow before breakfast, and did not fail to present ourselves in due time at the Dean's door.

There the butler told us that we were to be matriculated at two, and handed us over to a tutor, who would take us up to the Vice-Chancellor for that purpose, and at two we went with a herd of "men," as they are called, though we were all, in reality, boys. Some of those who had gathered the day before at Killcanon were found wanting—they had failed to satisfy the Dean. As for us, we were congratulated by some who had seen how the butler had called us away.

"What, you two here!" said one, "why I thought when that old buffer came that the Dean had sent and turned you out of the examination."

I remember that the Vice-Chancellor was Dr. Rowley of University, and if I am not mistaken we were matriculated in his house. I still have the slip of blue paper signed in his hand which admitted me a member of the University as "*armigeri filius*," the son of a gentleman bearing coat armour, *ex Æde Christi*.

Yes! besides our name those arms were all that we Franklins had left of our old estate.

They were very simple and plain, on the well-

known herald maxim : "*Simplex nobilitas stemmata prisca facit*;" which may be rendered,—
"Simple arms show ancient houses."

Here are ours : "*Gules a fess or*," meaning a red shield with a band across it in the midst gold colour.

No doubt the first Franklin who wore coat armour chose a yellow belt to distinguish him and his men in the Crusades ; and as the colour of his shield was red, his arms were arranged by the heralds, who reduced those early bearings to a science, thus—

"*Gules*"—that is the blood-red colour of a lion's throat, or *guele*—and across it the yellow band then called a *fess*, from being low down across the hips.

So much for our coat armour, which, I may as well tell you, is not the same as our "crest," though the ignorant babble about the two as if they were one and the same thing. No man, the heralds say, can change his coat armour without the king's or the queen's leave—that is to say, without paying Garter a handsome fee ; but any one may change his crest and motto. They belong personally to him, while the arms, properly so called, belong to his family, and he can no more alienate them than a tenant in tail can

sell a landed estate. As for our crest, it had always been a flaming sword, which, I take it, meant that the first Franklin, the eponymus of the race, brandished the family sword with such vigour that it seemed to flame and flicker in the air, as it's outline became indistinct from that rapid motion.

Our motto was a very common one, "Strike;" and I have no doubt the first Franklin smote a good stroke before he took it, or his friends and enemies in those old days would have laughed at him. There are many "Strikes" used as mottoes by old cavaliers, a fact not to be wondered at, considering the rough and ready times in which they took their rise, but the oddest of all the "Strikes" is that borne by the old family of Dakyns, whose crest is a battle-axe, with the motto, "Strike, Dakyns! the Devil's in the Hempe."

Can it mean that some enemy of the king, some red-headed traitor, had taken refuge in a pile of hemp, and that the Dakyns of the day, finding him out, smote him there and then with that battle-axe, and slew him? Let Garter explain those things, for I cannot.

But to return; as soon as it was over—I mean the matriculation—the Vice-Chancellor's "bedel"

—mind, not “beadle,” but “bedel”—handed us his certificate and a copy of the statutes, those Caroline Statutes, drawn up by Laud, which so long governed his darling University.

No one has ever done justice to those laws, both sumptuary and moral, which were laid down for our guidance, and which, be it observed, we had sworn to keep. I have sworn so much, and taken so many oaths to obey things pertaining to the University and the State, only to see myself forced by law to break them over and over again, that my conscience is rather callous on what I may distinguish as public swearing.

But this was our first public swearing, and I remember that, besides swearing to keep all those statutes, we were required to swear for the king—this was in William the Fourth’s days—and at the Pope.

Oh, the poor Pope ! well may he be on his last legs, and scarce have land enough left him to stretch them on ; well may he be so reduced as not to be lord of one lizard, when England for centuries—England, so well known to be the most moral and enlightened and religious country in the world, that chosen land where hypocrisy and double-dealing are extinct—has been swearing at him for centuries, and has scarcely yet left off.

It often strikes me that swearing is like the springs that water the earth, they are slow to feel the descending rain, but they seldom fail, and so it is that the poor Pope—for I do pity such a piece of antiquity—has come to an end under the accumulation of execration which has been hurled at his head by millions of Protestants for so many ages.

I do not think—not even excepting the Athanasian Creed—there ever was such a fierce rattling oath as that we then swore on behalf of the King's supremacy in these lands, and against the absurd and damnable doctrine "that any prince, prelate, or potentate hath, or ought to have, any dominion within these realms."

"That was what the Americans call tall swearing," said Irwin, as he returned from the Vice-Chancellor's house. "I wonder what ever so many millions 'of my poorest countrymen, who are at this hour asleep,' in their Popish errors, would say to that one on the King's supremacy."

"But here," I said, as I peeped into the thin volume, bound in sheepskin—"here are things which concern you and me, more closely. I see as we are still at school, you know, this book tells us not to play at marbles in 'Penniless Bench,' wherever that may be, and it warns us against

fatuoso illo et absurdo modo in ocreis obambulandi, that silly and absurd fashion of walking about in boots; but that is just what we are doing at this very moment, for we are both walking about in boots named after the great captain who won the battle of Waterloo, and who, to make matters worse, happens to be the revered Chancellor of this University! How do you explain that, Irwin?"

"By reading 'top' before 'boots,'" he said. "For they, no doubt, are the boots against which the wrath of the University was directed."

"And then such Latin," I said. "What do you make of this, as the rule to be observed by all undergraduates, when they meet the Vice-Chancellor? I see we are to make his duties light by *suaviter compellando et caput aperiendo ad justum intervallum*. Can it be by playfully chaffing him, and breaking his head a little?"

"No, silly," said Irwin. "Don't be so much in earnest. Can't you see that it means saying 'sir' to him with a pleasant, polite voice, and by lifting your trencher cap to a proper distance from your head."

"Oh! is that what it means? Upon my word I should never have thought it. This Latin is too wonderful for me."



CHAPTER VIII.

HOW WE RETURNED TO TOWN, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

As our matriculation was over, and we had been graciously informed by our tutor that the Dean expected us to come into residence on the 18th of October following, we had nothing now left to do, but to return to town and school as soon as possible—the more so, as, being now members of the University, we were subject to the rule of the proctors, and might be proctorized at any moment, if we were found loitering about the streets without our academicals in the day-time, or either with or without them late at night.

We determined, therefore, to go back by one of the Bath night coaches, if we could get places outside; for we fancied there could be nothing so jolly as travelling by coach by night.

This Irwin was more bent on doing than I, because that quarrelling pair of Irish guardians insisted on his going inside the mail to Holyhead whenever he went home, and, in one or two cases, had the atrocity to send him all the way by steam to Dublin from the Thames. We consulted the Boots, therefore, at the Angel, and he said he was sure there would be room, as "them Bath coaches" were never full. "The drivers don't make themselves pleasant to the gen'lemen."

We booked our places, and paid the Boots something provisional to look after them, after which he growled out the additional information that "there was allers a lot of caddling Dons, a sort of Low-Church parsons, as came up by night from Bath, and went to St. Edmund's Hall."

This was no doubt a wicked and malicious scandal against the pastors and members of convocation reared at the venerable St. Teddy's hostel; but what did we know about it? that was what the Boots said, perhaps out of malice prepense, but, at any rate, he said it, and we believed it, in the hope that what he said of the certainty of places might prove true.

The time for the arrival of the coach was midnight, and Irwin and I stood out on the pavement before the Angel. It is now gone, fled to the

realms of good angels, who had not cheated those who trusted them, but then it stood in the High Street, above University College, and was, certainly, *the* hotel in Oxford.

Well, up came the coach; and, sure enough, when the Boots called out in the dark to the guard, "Any places, Bill?" Bill replied in a voice which could only have got so hoarse and husky from an accumulation of many colds, one a-top of the other,

"Yes, room for two behind, alongside of me. You'd best see to them at once, as I seen a reverend gent a-running arter the coach like winkin at the bottom of the High. Blest if he didn't think to 'Hi' it like a London 'bus."

"Then I takes them for two of my gents," cried the Boots, and then, turning to us, he said, "Them places is yourn; just throw up your traps, for here comes the reverend gent, running along as ragged as a cuckoo."

Now it so happened—though you, in this effeminate age, will never believe it, with your *cacheenez's*, and comforters, and overcoats—that neither Irwin nor I had any traps of the kind the Boots suggested; but Irwin clambered up, and kept our places against the reverend gentleman

and all comers, while I looked after our port-manteaus.

I must say that reverend gent did not behave with much forbearance, for he got up, and tried to jostle Irwin off the back seat, and acted in other respects in a very unclerical way. It seems he had reckoned on the place, and claimed it as having called out to the guard at the other end of the High Street. When Irwin appealed to the guard, who said he had never heard him, the reverend gentleman said he was a man of Belial, and as for Irwin, his conduct was most "unchristian."

"Then," said Irwin, just as I mounted to his assistance, "I must be content to be a heathen; for I think, if any one is to travel inside, it ought to be the last comer."

"Just so," said the guard; "I telled the Reverend Blazer so, but he wouldn't listen no more than the deaf hadder of what he has 'eard and read."

"And must I, then, go inside?" said the Reverend Blazer, "and is this the way the Church and the Missions are treated by this generation of—"

"Not vipers," I suggested.

"Werry true, not wipers, not by no means," put in the guard.

"Well," said the Reverend Blazer, "for your sakes I will not finish the quotation, and as a trial, I conclude I must go inside."

"Best make haste," said the guard; "Jack Adams will be on the box in a minute, and then if so be the coach went on just a little bit you might be chucked off."

"Oh, dear! let me get down by all means," and so the Reverend Blazer slowly descended, not unlike a sloth, and was duly ensconced in the inside along with a fat old woman, for all the world like Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Harris, only those famous women were then still dormant in the brain of Dickens.

"Now, then, are you all right?" shouted Jack Adams from the box.

"All right," cried the guard.

"Then hold hard," said Jack, and away we rattled over the noisy round pebbles with which the High Street was then paved.

The moon shone bright as we drove over Magdalen Bridge, and the tower of Waynflete and his stately college looked as lovely on our departure as it had appeared on our arrival.

"They knew how to build, at any rate," said Irwin.

"And to pray," I added.

"Perhaps," said Irwin; "but I can see they could build."

All this time Bill, the guard, had been awakening what he called the "hecco" with a French horn. He played it very well, though rather frantically, and I thought if he played at that rate every night, it must be rather trying to the rest of sleepers at that end of the High Street.

"Don't they ever complain?" I asked him, as he paused to take breath as we went up Headington Hill.

"Complain!" he said, "complain! what cause have they to complain?"

"Of the noise—of the music, I mean."

On which Bill looked as hard at me as he could in the moonlight, and said to my great astonishment—

"The man as has not music in his 'ead is fit to murder and to rob a church."

"And pray where does that come from?" I asked.

"Come from," he said, with great contempt, "why, from 'Shakessphere,' in course. I've knowed it ever since I was that high," pointing to an imaginary standard in the midnight air. "Complain," muttered Bill, "what would be the good of it if they did? Why, a coach is like a

bird; you might as well stop a French horn on a coach as a nightingale in a bush. Hark to them now how they sings, the pretty darlings, in Shotover Woods. You may scare them away just as a man may throw up his windy and swear at a coach, but you can't stop it or its music. Why, it's agin the law. Wind music on coaches is always free. It isn't like them impostors the Waits, fellers that don't know one tune from another, and comes round rousing folk out of their beauty sleep; they ought to be stopped. Well and good, but stop a guard with his French horn, the thing's ridiculous!"

And so we went on up over Shotover Hill. Shotover, which William the Third gave to one Schütz or Shoots, in whose family it had been till then, though since they have died out, and the estate, with its ochre works and its wild woods, came back to the crown. As the horses trotted up the hill the nightingales sang as they only can in mid England in May. Shotover Hill and Bagley Wood, on the other side of the river, on the Abingdon Road, were their favourite haunts, and no doubt they still sing there, though Bill and his French horn and so many other things have passed away. Bill, who evidently had music in his soul, though he had not Shakespeare in his

head, respected the rival band, and did not play a note till we had passed Wheatley. We were all ears except the Reverend Blazer and the old woman, who were detected, when Bill got down to put on the skid, sound asleep inside, and before Bill began to play again, Irwin asked him how he knew his name was the Reverend Blazer.

"'Cos he's often come down here to preach in the Town Hall for the conversion of the Jews. I know nothing of the Jews, but I know Christians a deal worse than any Jew could be. Why can't the Reverend Blazer convert them? I have 'eard say as how every Jew as they converts costs them a thousand pound, and when they is converted they're a deal worse Christians than they were Jews, and so I don't think much of the Reverend Blazer and his conversion."

By this time we were getting on to the cold time of the night, and at its very coldest we were on Stokenchurch Hill, for as we came by the low, we went by the high road, and now Irwin's anticipations of jollity in travelling by night were fully realized. Our teeth chattered in our thin clothing, and we were glad to accept a rug which Bill threw over us both at once.

"It's all very brave," he said, "talking of

hardening oneself, but there's many that gets their death in doing it." Then he turned to a sailor who sat beside us and asked abruptly—

"And pray how do you keep the cold out?"

The sailor, who was even more lightly clad than we were, all in blue broadcloth, and with a waistcoat open in front, pulled out a bottle which might have held half a pint, and said,—

"There was five of these betwixt here and Bristol. Two was rum, and three was gin."

"And a very good way too so long as it lasts," said Bill, "but you'll get the roomatics before long, my beauty."

By the time we had reached Beaconsfield both Irwin and I had had quite enough of the fresh morning air. We got back to Westminster in time for second school, but we were fit for nothing all day. At noon it seemed six p.m. at least, and right glad we were to get to bed early in spite of Dick's declaration that the school was going to the dogs when two great fellows in the sixth were so tired after sitting up all night on the Oxford coach.



CHAPTER IX.

MY MOTHER BUYS BUTTERSTEEP HOUSE.

VERY soon after Mr. Chrysostom returned, and came to see us, full of consolation and advice. When he gently and tenderly asked something about our circumstances, he was very happy to hear how well off we had been left. But that was only at first, for when I let him into the secret of the Barbarossa and the other mines his face grew even longer than that of Mr. Fiveoaks, and if he had ever whistled he would have treated us to a blast louder even than that blown by that worthy gentleman.

"It is no concern of mine, Frank," he said, "but I own I am concerned for your mother. You are a man, and can shift for yourself, but what is to become of her if the Barbarossa ceases to work?"

"Oh, but it will not, I am quite sure," I said; "Mr. Ball assures us it will not, and he was such a friend of my father."

At all which Mr. Chrysostom only shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

Once when he was there Mr. Fiveoaks came in to talk to my mother about that investment in land in Berkshire, and after he had ended his visit he and Mr. Chrysostom walked off together, and I am sure they talked of nothing but our mining investments, for Mr. Ball would never allow us to call them "speculations," and if they only drew as long faces when they were together as they had each drawn to us, their faces must have been very long indeed.

As soon as they were gone—this was in those glorious Whitsuntide holidays which Westminster boys have—my mother called me to her, and said,

"You know, Frank, I am thinking of returning to live in the country, and Mr. Fiveoaks has been to tell me that he has seen a house and some acres of ground which he thinks will just suit me. I can buy it for the sum which my father left me, and I will live there while you are at Oxford, and with you afterwards there, and I will die there, and I will be buried there,

and before I die I will take *him* there. I cannot bear that he should lie in Kensal Green and I far away in the sweet country."

"But where is this place?" I asked.

"In the parish of Winkfield, between Bagshot and Ascot, out on the heath, and surrounded by old oaks on the crown land."

"Dear me, how nice!" I cried; "when shall we go down to see it?"

"That is just what Mr. Fiveoaks came to ask, and I am to write to him about it."

"Let it be some day in my holidays," I said.

"Of course," said my mother, and so we very soon fixed the day.

Hear, again, you people who go down to Ascot by the 9.30 train, or the 11 train, or the 2.20 train, or the 4.45, or the 5.50, or the 6.45—you little think how hard it was to get to Winkfield by any public conveyance at the time of which I write. I am really not sure whether there was a coach once a day, but if there was it was as much as there was. It was a crawling two-horse creature, too, and crept along by Hyde Park Corner, and Hounslow, and Staines, and Egham, where it turned into Windsor Park, and so on, out on the road to Winkfield, that long and straggling parish.

When I and my mother went it took us six hours to do the thirty odd miles, and we had to stay the night at the Hind's Head in Bracknell after we had seen our proposed purchase, simply because it was impossible to get back to town by coach. True, we might have posted up to town, but really we never thought of it, and we were very happy in the Hind's Head that balmy summer night.

But I am getting on too fast. How did you like our house that was to be ?

Well, it was an old-fashioned stone house, and the upper part of it was pargetted with oak. And it had over-hanging eaves and barge boards, and there were jasmines and creepers all about it, and a very pretty stiffly laid-out garden with yew hedges centuries old, and an excellent, old-fashioned kitchen garden, on the walls of which grew self-sown rockets and snap-dragons, and wall-flowers, and hartstongue-ferns where there was any shade.

The house itself stood away from the road on the spur of a hill, on which were scattered here and there huge old Scotch firs, with every now and then a beech or an oak looking like the last remnants of a forest, as no doubt they were, and along other spurs and butts and mamelons spread

thriving plantations of chestnut, fir, and birch. The whole domain was about sixty acres, and with the house it was to be had for £5000; not a very low and not a very high price. A part of it, too, let me add, had never been reclaimed, but was still covered with the most luxuriant heath, the haunt of bees and butterflies, and delightfully fragrant in the blossom time. It was rather wild and out-of-the-way, some people might have called it a cut-throat lonely place, but as soon as my mother stood on the hill on which the house was built, and gazed away into Surrey and Hampshire as far as the Hind's Head—not the inn aforesaid, but the hill—her heart clave to it, and she said,

“We cannot better this; let us two, Frank, live and die here.”

Now I do not know that I was so much taken with Buttersteep House, for that was its name, as my mother. The young are fond of changing and ranging about the world, and dislike being tied to one place, a feeling so congenial to older people, who have done their work and wish to rest. But still I thought it a charming place, and as I knew Mr. Fiveoaks would not buy it unless he considered it a good investment, I was glad to do as my mother wished, and said I could be happy wherever she chose to live.

So there on that hill she kissed me again and again in the fondness of a proud mother's heart, and as we stood under the firs as the evening sun in June was setting, she said,

"Yes, Frank, here we will live, and here you shall bring the wife of your choice, and when I die, I will leave it to you and your children."

Dear mother! how fond she was of me, and how her heart jumped to the wildest conclusions for my welfare.

It was after that tender scene, which I hope none of you think I ought to be ashamed to write, that we drove off in the fly we had hired at the Hind's Head, for that inn, where in due time we arrived, devoured our tea, and went to bed.

Next morning, the "Pig," or the "Sloth," or whatever was its name, called for us, and dragged us back to town. We started about noon, and it was seven before we got back to Wimpole Street.

So charmed was my mother with Buttersteep House, that she could not rest till Mr. Fiveoaks had signed the contract for it. Then she wished to have instant possession, lest, as she said, she should lose the summer.

"Far better lose the summer than your principal," said Mr. Fiveoaks. "Law is law, and will no more be hurried than a tortoise. When you

can make a tortoise into a race-horse, you may make law fast."

When my mother still went on to ask "how soon" Buttersteep House would be hers, the provoking old fellow only answered, "How soon? Why perhaps 'never.' There may be a flaw in the title, or the Bank of England may break, or I may run away with your money."

"One just as likely to happen as the other," cried my mother.

"Who can tell?" said Mr. Fiveoaks. "But as for Buttersteep House, I have put the matter in hand, and demanded an abstract of the vendor's title; when counsel have inquired into that and found it satisfactory, it will be time to think of possession; but even then you must not be too sure, for the vendor with the best title in the world may not be able to prove it. There may be lunatics—"

"There will be lunatics," cried my mother; "at least there will be one more if you talk in that cold-blooded way. Haven't I told you I have set my heart on Buttersteep House? I must and will have it."

At which Mr. Fiveoaks only rubbed his knees with his withered old hands, as was his wont when at all excited, and said,

"Well, my dear madam, we shall see! we shall see! all in good time! Say three months hence." Then, finding he could not console my mother, he took his leave.

Very different was the behaviour of Mr. Ball. As soon as ever he heard of my mother's wish to buy Buttersteep and take immediate possession, he agreed with her. Nothing could be more absurd, he said, than the practice of the slow coaches of the profession, for as such he not obscurely hinted he considered Mr. Fiveoaks.

"There was no sort of occasion," he said, "for half the law's delays, which in nine cases out of ten were caused, not by the law, but by the lawyers. Their tortoise way might do all very well in country practice, where they had little of it, and spun it out accordingly, but in town and in the city men of business could not afford to wait; they must have their law cut and dried as it were. There was Mr. Vowells, whom you saw," he said to my mother, "why Vowells was only two days in inquiring into the title of the Barbarossa, and as for the Del Demonio and the Greenland Graphite Company he only asked for a sight of the grants of concession, and in a week the deeds of those companies were drawn up and ready for signing."

"But," said I, who was by, and was, I believe, tempted by the Demonio to ask the question, "but did Mr. Vowells and you bring out all those companies in one week? I thought you said they were investments made by my father at various times."

"Really," said Mr. Ball, relapsing into his sleek and oily manner, "it is quite impossible to carry on a conversation with one person and that one so acute as Mrs. Franklin, and to answer the questions, innocent and well meant, no doubt, of ingenuous youth. Youth, my dear young friend, is the season of doubt and cavil, and when you are a little older, you will not ask such questions as to the investments made by your lamented father. But," he went on, turning to my mother, "I have an engagement with Mr. Vowells in the city, and I must wish you good-bye. By all means carry out your intention of returning to the country as soon as possible. There is nothing so soothing to a wounded heart as to revisit the scenes of one's youth, and may you, my dear Mrs. Franklin, derive all the benefit from your investment which your patience and forbearance so richly deserve."

With these words he vanished behind a cloud of words, leaving me to admire his dexterity, but

at the same time with the conviction that he had in no sort answered my question.

"Three companies in one week," I said to myself; "that certainly is a feat which Mr. Fiveoaks would be quite incapable of performing. But I dare say the title of Buttersteep, if we ever do get it, will be quite as safe as, or safer, than those of this boasted Barbarossa, and Del Demonio, and Greenland Graphite Company, all which Mr. Vowells brought out in one week."

In spite of the warnings of Mr. Fiveoaks that inquiry of title did not last so very long. He was better than his word, a doer rather than a talker, and so just about the end of July, ten days in fact before the Westminster holidays came and I left the school, her old trustee wrote to my mother to say that Buttersteep House was hers, and that she might take possession of it as soon as she chose.

Then came a choice of the furniture which we were to take, for we had more than we wanted in the country, and it was amusing to see how fond we both, and indeed we all were, of our old things. I say all, for Mary and Thomas were just as loath to part with the chairs and tables they had eaten off and sat on as we were. It was not at all unlike going round with a landed pro-

prietor to mark trees for felling when he has made up his mind to fell none at all. This must not come down because it spoils the view, that because it will make the road look hideous; if that were felled it would leave an ugly gap from the hall windows two miles off, and so after walking miles and miles, you return home with very good appetites, but having marked exactly three very scrubby trees, worth perhaps five pounds, in a ten-mile walk.

So it was with our furniture. We could not find it in our hearts to part with it, and the end was that we sent off into the country ever so many van loads more than we wanted. It fortunately happened that in the attics under the pointed gables of Buttersteep House there was plenty of room to stow our superfluities away, but what we should have done without them I cannot conceive.

What became of the few things which were actually rejected because no one cared for them I never quite knew; I suppose a broker came with a van and carried them off, and chuckled over his bargain, as I have no doubt he got them dirt cheap.

Just about this time the sad time came that I had to leave school. Without going so far as

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to agree with the dictum of that famous headmaster who said, when he saw a small boy crying for home, "Boy, the school is your father, and your mother, and your brothers and sisters;" it cannot be denied that Westminster school was very much to me, and I could re-echo the sentiment contained in an epigram of the "*Lusus Alteri Westmonasteriensis*":—

"Has puer ignotas intravi parvulus ædes,
Dum potui lacrymas vix retinere meas.
Idem ego, cui pectus, lapsis feliciter annis
Te schola cara, hodie triste valere jubet."

No boy I believe was ever so much benefited by school, as I came to it a very delicate, rather spoilt little urchin of ten, and I left it between eighteen and nineteen almost a man, with tastes and feelings which I could hardly have acquired elsewhere. Lucky, too, in having Irwin as my friend, for without him the school would never have been half as much to me. I think, too, in mere bookwork he taught me more than ten tutors, and without him I should never have half understood the glorious Abbey. It seems to me only yesterday that he and I in that last half, having the run of the place by the help of our friends the vergers, went over the Abbey from

the shrine of the Confessor to the top of the towers, seeing our friends the falcons, as we emerged on the top. Those towers, bad, architecturally, as they are, were then the highest buildings in Westminster, for you will remember that Barry's New Palace was not then thought of.

As we gazed from that elevation on Westminster and London beneath our feet into the river winding like a yellow ribbon below us, Irwin exclaimed, very much as Mr. Chrysostom had expressed his feelings years before from Westminster Bridge,

"What a fine sight, with all its squalor and ugliness!"

Then pointing out the mud on either side of the river, which was then about at half ebb, he went on,

"Some day or other, though you and I, I dare say, won't live to see it, the river will be quayed and embanked on both sides, like Dublin and the Liffey. There," he added, "you don't often find the Irishman coming out in me, but I must say it is a shame that what we Paddys have done for our river should not be done for the Thames."

It was on the same lionizing visit, when we went to leave our P. P. C. cards on the old Abbey, that Irwin said—

"Now I'll show you something which, I dare say, you never remarked before. Do you see, all along the walls of the nave and choir, these shields of arms hung, as it were, by ribbons just below the line of the windows? Every now and then a shield or two has disappeared before the desire of the friends of some uninteresting man to rear a hideous monument to his memory like this of Tyrwhitt, which, you see, swallows up a whole window with its load of black and white marble wall! These shields contain the coats of the princes and great barons who contributed to build the Abbey in Henry the Third's time. Here is the manche of the Hastings and the red bull of the Dacres, not to speak of the lilies of France, and the eagle of the Hohenstauffen, for among these pious alms-givers were both the holy Roman emperor and St. Louis of France. They ought to have been respected as the most precious monuments in the Abbey, and see how simple they are, and what little space they fill, and yet how cut about and mutilated they are!"

Alas! how unchangeable some things are, and how changeable others! It was but a little while ago that I went over the old Abbey and saw all the lions. There were the old shields, not more mutilated than they were when Irwin and I stood

before them. They are now properly valued, and if nothing is done to them, it is only because it is far better to leave them as they are. But where is Irwin? and what am I? and what has become of the two boys then bursting into manhood, and so full of life and hope?





CHAPTER X.

WE GO DOWN TO BUTTERSTEEP.

WHEN the fatal morning came, how very sad we both were! how Mrs. Stellfox, dear old thing, could scarce restrain her tears!

"The two best boys that ever were," she said, forgetting how many tricks we had played—I especially—and what pickles we had been in, in the earlier part of our career. One of her expressions of feeling to Irwin was characteristic—

"Why have you not a brother to keep up the connection? I hate only sons!" forgetting that she had just overwhelmed us with an outburst of affection. In a worldly point of view, of course, it would have been more profitable to her if both of us had had three or four brothers, all either at, or coming to the school. But profit was not what

she meant, I am sure, for she was the least mercenary and the most liberal of women. She ought to have been a duchess, both from her station and her heart, and I am sure she would have spent any number of thousands a year with dignity and judgment. Then her nieces cried, and old Jane said she would have cried, only she had shed so many tears already in her life, that she had cried herself out. And when we had "tipped" her and old Dick—who said at our departure what he had never said before, for he was not given to praise, "There yqu two go, both of you of the good old sort"—we went into our last school, and spent the time in doing nothing but taking leave of our friends. And after it was over, we called on Dr. Williamson, and each left him, after the custom of the school, ten pounds in an envelope, and he said he hoped, as old Westminster, we would not forget the school, and that he should look out for our names in the Oxford Class Lists.

At parting, he gave us a book each, with the arms of Westminster on the side, and then it was really all over, and our carriage came to fetch Irwin and me, and Thomas carried off our luggage and books on a hackney coach, which were not then extinct, and so we drove to Wimpole

Street, where Irwin was to stay till the Holyhead mail started in the evening.

And so it was all over, that school life, and we were now just about to take our second great step into the world.

How dear and charming my mother was ! and how constantly she thought of me !

"Mr. Irwin," she said, "you know we are going into the country. Do you think your guardians would let you come and stay with us in Berkshire when we are a little settled ? It would be such a pleasure to me and Frank."

"I will do what I can to persuade them," he said. "You know that each of them, fond as they are of me, would far rather I stayed with any one else than the other of the pair."

"Then there's hope," she said ; "pray come if you can."

That evening Irwin went, as he had intended ; and a week after, all our preparations having been completed, my mother and I went down into Berkshire. I forgot to tell you that we had already sold our lease in Wimpole Street on advantageous terms.

But if I had been sorry to leave school, how much more grieved was my mother to leave Wimpole Street ! It would be a relief for her to

leave a house which perpetually reminded her of him she had lost, and yet it was agony to part from it when the time came. How she went about from room to room, now sadly dismantled, but dear to her because that had been the drawing-room which he so seldom entered, except at night; this the dining-room where he so often—in that corner by the fire—so often snored in his arm-chair after dinner, till Thomas woke him up with—

“Tea is ready in the drawing-room, sir.”

Here was his study, where he did his accounts when he had any time for them, and his banker's book, when he thought his balance was good—there the pegs where his hat hung, and there the umbrella-stand, still with his old umbrella in it, which she had allowed no one to touch.

Dear me! how very sad it was; it was like the funeral over again—the horrors of which I have spared you, as, indeed, I passed rapidly over my father's death, and what followed it, because my breast smote me as I thought of it, that, young though I was, I had never been good enough and dutiful enough to him.

But even misery must have an end. Those last days dragged themselves slowly out, and the morning of our departure came.

We had enough of the Sloth on that journey of ours to look at our new house, and so we resolved to post down in our carriage, changing horses at Hounslow and Staines. That is to say, we drove our horses the first stage, and there we left our coachman with the pair, and went on the rest of the way posting. Our cook, who had been long with us, went down the day before, and a housemaid. Mary went in the rumble with Thomas, and, I think, another woman servant went down by the Sloth. So now you have the whole household accounted for.

And here let me remark how good the old race of servants were, and how kind my mother must have been to them, when, on putting the question to them if they cared to go into the country, and would follow us, they all, without exception, said "Yes."

I really believe there is nothing that servants hate so much as the country, and as for scenery, they have no notion of it. There may, of course, be exceptions, but the rule is, I am sure, as I lay it down. I remember meeting an unhappy friend of mine at Oban, who had dragged all his family down to Mull, wife, children, and servants, expecting they would like it because he and his wife liked wild scenery. Instead of that, he told

me he was sure the servants all thought they were doing him a favour in going to that savage place. They cared much more for butcher's-meat and porter than for sunsets and scenery. Fish they would eat to oblige him and "missus," but what he and she could see in such a wilderness to admire they could not understand.

At last, after two or three months of disgust, they went back to Glasgow by steam, and as soon as they saw the filthy streets of that city, and breathed, as it were, their own old London smoke and dust again, the servants were quite happy, while their master and mistress were full of regrets at leaving delightful Mull.

"Thank heaven!" the maids said, "we have got to a place fit for the likes of us, and can see some of our fellow-creatures"—for they looked on the islanders as something quite beneath them, and thought people who could live on porridge, and milk, and barley scones as little better than savage barbarians.

The result was, that my friend never took all his family to Mull again; when he goes, he leaves his servants behind him, and, even in the case of his children, it is often, particularly when they are young, a very doubtful good to drag them about on long journeys for the sake of sight-seeing.

They are far better pleased to paddle about on the sands at Broadstairs or Bognor, or on the seaweed at Worthing, catching crabs, and, if you have a nurse you can trust, you had much better leave them with her—only, in that case, your wife, yes! the wife of your bosom, may prefer to stay with them, too. If so, what then?—why, that the father is left to go to Scotland, if he likes it, either alone, or with the elder boys—but I need not tell you that a well-regulated father does not like it, and so he stays at the cockney places aforesaid.

And this all comes of the hatred which, I am sure, servants almost always have of the country. I am sure, therefore, our old servants were very good.

And, if you look at it sensibly, you will see that the country is very dull for servants. You, if you are dull at your great place or your little property, can pack up your things, and come up to town to see the exhibition, or go away to stay for five days with your friends and neighbours. They are always glad to see you, because your wife is not a fright, and you, of course, are pleasant and agreeable. You can play whist, and even backgammon, and you don't—out of your own house, my dear sir, I mean—fall asleep after

dinner! You have resources, in fact, in yourself, and can impart what you know to others; so people are glad to see you!

But, if servants feel dull and bored, what are they to do in the country? They never see any friend, even at the area gate. Where are the tradesmen calling for orders, so grateful to the cook's comfort and dignity? Yes, where? They have subsided into a local butcher's boy in a cart with a pony—for I need not say you now bake at home—another grievance. That boy, and the postman, who is very often the most idiotic man in the parish, are her only society, and as for the housemaids, they do not even see them. If there is a pond or a lake at your house, I wonder all the women do not commit suicide. They can read, you say, and work, but suppose, like you, they neither work nor read if they can help it? Their only comfort is having their meals "regular," but even those are not so good, though they may be quite as "regular," as they used to be in town; for the meat in the country is confessedly worse than Mr. Allen's, or Mr. Lidstone's, or Mr. Slater's, or Mr. Scarlett's.

For these and many other reasons, therefore, it is not wonderful that servants prefer town to country, and so we were very fortunate in carry-

ing them all with us, even in that primitive age.

I remember the day of the month ; it was the 10th of August, 183—, two days before the annual "Grousicide." It was one of those hazy sweltering days which warn all who have not left town to fly from it as fast as they can—all except servants I mean.

When we got up in the morning there stood the carriage at the door, a landau, I believe it was called, a sort of extinct monster among carriages, with rumble and sword-case, and boot and imperial, and heaven knows what besides. There it stood without horses, for it took so long to pack they would have been starved to death while waiting for us. But having dragged the carriage thither, they left it, and were already back in their stable munching their corn and hay, and wondering, if horses ever wonder, why they had been taken out for so short a drive in the early morning.

When I got down to breakfast, though I was an early riser, Thomas was in his shirt sleeves in the hall, working, as he himself said, like "one of them black niggers," at [packing the plate which was to go in the boot, I believe, while Mary was stuffing the imperial and other boxes

which belonged to the monster with "mistress's gowns"—she said "gowns," mind, not "dresses."

My mother was in the dining-room pretending to have breakfast, but looking as though every mouthful she tried to eat would choke her. When she had "done," as she called it, she went upstairs, and I could hear her wandering like a ghost from room to room, till at last I ran up after her, when I was "done" too, and found her in a flood of tears in her bedroom.

"It is very hard to leave the old home," she sobbed; "though it was all my own doing. Do you know I have often felt as if *he* were only gone away for a journey, and would come back to us? Perhaps he won't come to the new place."

"Dearest mother, be calm!" I said. "Alas! he is gone and gone for ever. We may meet him somewhere else, but neither here nor in the new place."

Then she gulped down her grief and was calm for a while, only to burst out into fresh transports a little further on. I had never before seen her so "unwomaned," if I may use the word. It seemed as though stunned by my father's death, her tears had never found full vent to flow till now.

You may imagine how I asked Thomas and

Mary to be quick, but a landau is not to be got off in a hurry, and so it was past twelve o'clock before we started.

Then came the last struggle, the last moment of our existence in the old house, and to my mother it was like the agony of death. I held her hand tight clasped in mine, and put her into the carriage, Mary Ball waved her hand to me as I drew down the blind, the coachman flicked his horses, and we left Wimpole Street behind us, making a dull clatter over the street as we rolled lazily along.

We had besought our coachman to drive slowly, as we had such a load. The horses were quite able to draw it, the man said, if they had time, and they took time, for we did not reach Hounslow till two, going at the rate of five miles an hour.

There when the postmaster saw the landau, he said we must have three horses at least, and four would be better. In vain we pointed out there were no hills, as the country was flat as a pancake to Staines, where we were to change again. He made us take three horses, a nondescript unicorn way of proceeding, and when we reached Staines in rather better time, we were forced to have four horses, because of Egham Hill and

the other hills between that and Buttersteep House.

This latter part of our journey we performed very brilliantly, and we recovered so much of our lost time that we actually arrived at our destination at six p.m. Think of that, ye present occupants of Buttersteep House, when you complain of the 4.45 train to Ascot being a quarter of an hour late.

No tongue can tell my delight at getting my mother away from sweltering London. I do not think, nor did I then think, that the real country begins on that road till you have passed Staines Bridge. By the way, Staines Bridge, which only last year the corporation of the city declared free of toll, was built in the very year we left London, and I am not sure that we were not some of the first *bond fide* travellers who crossed over it. Be that as it may, I believe the air on the Surrey side of the Thames at Staines is quite different from that on the Middlesex side. It smacks of pine woods and heath in Surrey, and of smoke and gas in Middlesex. It may be all fancy, but I think I could tell blind-fold when I had got as far as Egham.

Then the glory of the Park and the freshness of the green woods, as our landau rolled through

them, past George the Third's statue and the old oaks that stand at the end of the Sheet Street Road, all so gnarled and bluff, and, like Falstaff, so many yards in girth, all got by drinking in for centuries the sweet dew and soft rain, and breathing the fresh forest air.

Then, as we got more and more on to Bagshot Heath, and left man and his cultivated fields behind us, what joy it was to skirt Swinley, with its oaks and beeches and firs, and to come at last to Buttersteep, still more wild and still more balmy, an oasis of cultivation in the very midst of the heath.

Here it was that George the Third, when he was too infirm to ride on horseback, but wished to view his hounds, had rides cut in all directions across Bagshot Heath, at which the engineers and volunteers, called out to guard the country against the French, toiled to some purpose. Then, when the war was ended and Napoleon fell, it occurred to some wise person that it was great waste to leave such a vast tract of land idle, and an Enclosure Act was passed, by which all this outlying part of Windsor Forest and Bagshot Heath, over which the wild deer had roamed from time immemorial, was allotted to the Crown and the neighbouring landowners, some of whom made a very good thing by it.

It was out of one of those allotments that our Buttersteep estate, in the parish of Winkfield, arose. The first man to whom it was allotted planted it, and added to his allotment the old "House," which was so old that it might have dropped down from heaven for aught any one knew; and when he had got so far he was ruined, and had to make way for another happy owner, who, in his turn, had got tired, and sold it to my mother. Strange to say, though the land was worth little or nothing to cultivate, it always increased in value, because in this wealth-ridden county there is always some person with money in his pocket ready to rush in when a poorer owner gives way. And this is why Buttersteep was such a good investment, because its nearness to town made every one wish to buy it. This, added to the natural beauty of the site, quite justified dear old Fiveoaks in putting my mother's trust-money into it.

But I am raving and rambling. Where was I? Oh! just as we had got to the bottom of Buttersteep Hill, and were crawling up the ascent to the house. Did I tell you there was a lodge, a red-brick Elizabethan lodge, all smothered in jasmine and honeysuckle, peeping out at you as you came up the road. There were plantations right

and left stretching away ; and farther away, on the left, a kitchen garden, screened by a laurel hedge, and the stables not far from the garden, masked and hidden by clumps of firs.

All these were on the flat, as it were. Then the road wound very cunningly up the spurs of the hill, which reached out an elbow, as it were, to the traveller, and made a natural embankment ; and so the landau, without seeming to rise much, was soon fifty feet or more above the level of the lodge.

There, in the midst of plantations of rare firs and specimen trees, stood Buttersteep House, looking out from its windows on the ground floor far into Hampshire and Surrey. I say from its ground floor windows, for how many houses have I not known which have an excellent view—from the bedrooms or the attics, but none from the ground floor, so that unless one were a sparrow on the house-top one can never see the view, except when one is shaving and looking out of window, just the very worst moment, we should say, at which to admire a view, whether by sea or land.

Well, there we were at our new abode, and there the landau stood, the purse old thing, as if that last climb had quite taken the breath out of

its poor old body, for as it pulled up at the door it gave a grunt and a groan, as much as to say—"Get out, all of you. Not one step more will I stir to-day."

Down crawled Thomas and Mary, their faces grimed with dust and red with the summer sun, in spite of the gingham umbrella which he had held over his fellow-traveller the greater part of the way.

By the time they were down, I had opened the door and handed my mother out, and I had scarce done so before the cook and the maids were open-mouthed at the hall-door to receive us.

In these degenerate days, I dare say, any cook sent down from town to an out-of-the-way part of the country would have met her mistress open-mouthed indeed, but with it full of all her troubles and sorrows, such as that there was never a drop of soft water about the place, as if she had ever been accustomed to it in town; or that the "chimney smoked awful," and as for the blacks, they "was wuss than in Wimpole Street," as if chimneys never smoked in London, and as if it could be true that there could be as many blacks, when the nearest house was half a mile off, and that a cottage which burned nothing but wood.

But our cook, though open-mouthed, was not

full of those, or of any grievances. She was open-mouthed to welcome her mistress and me, which she did by saying—

“So glad to see you in your new house, ma’am, and Master Frank, which I hope it will be a ’appy one to you both.”

So in we went into the dark and very picturesque hall, and very glad we were to sit down in it, without stirring a step farther, till cook brought us some tea, while Mary and Thomas went off in the direction of the kitchen, for the same praiseworthy object.

All this time the landau remained sulking out of doors in the warm, and sunning itself enough to shake all the moths out of it, if any existed. As for the horses, Thomas had paid the post-boy, and they were gone. The carriage was to wait there till our own horses came on from Hounslow in the cool of the evening.

“I hope it will be all safe there,” said my mother, speaking of the landau as though it were really endowed with life, and were likely to catch cold standing out in the evening air.

After that cup of tea, for which the heathen Chinese will surely escape punishment for many sins, both of omission and commission, my mother said,

"Let us take a walk, Frank, and leave the servants to settle things in their own way. Tomorrow will be quite time enough for the mistress's eye."

Where I may remark that it is no less curious than true that no woman ever thinks that any other woman can arrange a room except herself. A man will go into another man's room and say, How well this fellow has arranged his things! I don't think I could have done it better myself." But no woman will ever say that.

"Dear me! how untidy," she will say, and in a moment, if she had her way, chairs would go this way and sofas that; out of that corner and into this would come a table, and as for the piano it would be dragged into ever so many fresh positions before she was satisfied that she had made the room tidy. And now having pointed out this domestic truth, let us go out and take a walk round Buttersteep grounds.

But before you will stir a step, obstinate as that old landau facing you, you ask why Buttersteep *Unde derivatur nomen?* Now if any silly young person of either sex rushes in boldly and dares to say, because of the good "butter" made there, we shall laugh him to scorn and not name him our own topographer when we come into our

kingdom, and are appointing our great officers of state. And for a very good reason, there was not an ounce of butter made in Buttersteep when it was first so called by Saxon churls, nor to this day has our estate been very famous for its butter.

Let me, therefore, correct my impetuous young friend, and tell him or her that the "Butter" in Buttersteep comes from the butts or mamelons, those round hills which rise above the heath, and of which there are several on what I may still call "our land."

So it is that, in the old ordnance survey, when "our land" was still a waste of heather, we find those hills marked "Buttersteep," and the valley between them and around them, for they crop up in every corner like mushrooms, "Buttersteep Bottom." We have the word in Elizabethan English in the "artillery butts," that is to say, the earthen mounds, often the side of a hill, against which the archers practised, for artillery, as you all know, first of all meant archery before it came to be used for guns loaded with powder and ball.

"But now do just tell us," you all say, "is this a philological treatise or the true story of half your life? Do go out and take your walk,

and tell us rather of the grounds themselves than of the origin of the name which they bore !”

“Which way shall we go, mother ?” I said, as we passed out of the doorway.

“Any way, darling ; only keep, at [first, on the heights, and then let us go down into the level plain.”

We kept on the hill, therefore, and first surveyed the plateau, or, rather, the flat top of the spur of the hill on which the house stood. South of the house that spur ran away in an irregular bend, for, I suppose, 100 yards, and then all at once it stopped and fell off on one side in a steep descent of more than fifty feet. All the slopes on every side some former proprietor had planted with rare shrubs and conifers, and they were now thriving young trees. The top of the hill he had made into a sunk garden, filled with roses and geraniums, and what the gardeners call bedding-out plants, and when it came near the house, which stood on the very brink of the hill, the garden was extended in a series of terraces, looking down on a far lower level, for you must know that beyond the spur of the hill the ground sank down far more rapidly than on the side by which we had climbed it, so that the bottom on one side was fifty feet below us, as I have told you, and on the other ninety.

Added to this, the hill from which the spur stretched on which the house was built extended all along one side of our land, which was a long narrow bit, nearly a mile long, and all this hill was planted with firs and deciduous trees, forming splendid coverts for pheasants and rabbits.

When I write the word rabbit, I forbear, for the sake of the wildness and friskiness of that rodent, to devote him to execration for the harm he did to "our land" by devouring our crops of swedes and mangold, barking our trees, scratching up our potatoes, and generally doing us all the harm he could. That execration I leave to our bailiff and gardener, who, to use the words of Thomas, "was that envenimed against the rabbits, he wished he could a-shot them all at one charge out of his gun."

From which speech you will see that the same feelings may actuate a Nero and a gardener at different periods of the world's history, only one turns his tyranny against the whole human race and the other against the race of rabbits in general.

But to return to our walk. After my mother and I had surveyed the sunk garden, we passed along the terrace in front of the house, along which ran a row of standard roses of choice sorts, and went to a sort of plaisance at the other end

of the house, in which were grass walks and shrubberies, bounded by plantations to keep off the north-east wind. Then we walked along the side of the hill I have mentioned, until it came to an end and sunk down into the bottom, out of which the "Butts" rose, and then crossing a meadow or two we mounted one of the butts and from it saw the end of our lanky bit of land; out of its side gushed a spring of the purest water, which we tasted, and so took seisin of our new possession.

From the Butts a path led back to the house along the bottom, which had been reclaimed, most of it, into meadow, besides which a pond had been dug at great cost. From the bottom we gazed up at the house, and wished the hill were not so steep when we were so tired, but at last shame made us mount it, and so we reached the house and stood once more on the terrace, and passing into the drawing-room, we met the faithful Thomas, who had been looking for us everywhere to tell us that dinner would be ready in ten minutes.

"Dinner!" said my mother, "I thought we were to have no dinner."

"It would break cook's heart, ma'am, let alone mine," said Thomas, "if as how you was to come

into your own new house and not have dinner regular the first day."

There was no gainsaying such faithful servants. So my mother and I solemnly sat out that dinner, which was served in due form, and when it was over we were both as tired as any pair could be, and only too glad to go early to bed. And thus ends the story of taking possession of our new house, though as to the house itself I have told you very little, except of the outside.





CHAPTER XI.

HOW WE SETTLED DOWN, AND IRWIN CAME TO SEE US.

BUTTERSTEEP HOUSE had all the merits, and most of the faults of an old house. It was roomy and rambling, built at a time when land was not sold by the yard; but then its staircases were steep, all except the first flight, which was an old square well-staircase of oak; and it had passages which led to nothing and rooms with which no cupboard of the present day would have claimed kinship, they were such mere boxes.

On the ground floor was a hall, rather low and dark, into which the staircase descended. Then there was a long and rather narrow drawing-room, extending the whole length of the house, facing the terrace, with a bow window towards

the south, from which one got into the south garden. It was a very tolerable oriel window, with stone mullions, and, altogether, the drawing-room looked like a gallery. It was low in proportion to its length, and, in fact, all the rooms; above and below, were lower by a foot or two than modern builders make them. Out of the drawing-room, just at the oriel end, a door turned into a library, where the books we brought from Wimpole Street were deposited, and there it was that my mother established herself in her morning-room, or, as it is now the fashion to call it, her boudoir. This again had an entrance into the hall.

At the other end of the drawing-room was the dining-room, corresponding to the morning-room, again with a door out of the drawing-room and another into the hall. The dining-room and the morning-room were each in a wing of its own, and the porch and the hall were projections, so that when one drove up, you had two gables on either side, with the porch jutting out in the middle. Between it and the gables magnolias of great age grew up against the walls, and jasmines and honeysuckle, as I have before told you. There were two windows in the hall, that looked out on either side, and they, too, had kept their stone

mullions, as well as the range of windows above them, in the bedrooms.

They say no room should have three doors in it, but, I am sorry to say, this was the case with the dining-room in Buttersteep House, for, besides the doors I have named, there was a third, that led away to the kitchen and offices, which stood apart, screened by shrubberies at that end of the house, and had a drive up to them of their own, which turned off from the main approach.

As for the bedrooms, I am sure I don't know how many there were, but many more than we could ever want. My mother chose one for herself, not facing the morning sun, which woke her up too early, and she had hard work to sleep at all, she said, whatever aspect her room might have.

Mine was on the other side of the house, looking towards the south-east, and far away over the wooded knolls and butts in the foreground to the distant hills beyond; and out of that old window, outside the casement of which creepers twined their tendrils, I have often sat and gazed with the same feeling as that expressed by Wordsworth, in the lines which Mr. Chrysostom quoted on old Westminster Bridge. Whoever sits at the old window still sees the same view, now

rather marred by rising houses in the distance, but still unchangeable in all its distinctive features. It is only the gazer on the view, the man who buys and sells it as if it were his own, that changes and passes away, like the autumn leaves, and another comes into his place, and talks of "our" view, as though it belonged to him for ever.

Mary's room was near mine, and not, you may be sure, far from her mistress's. From a nurse, she had passed into a housekeeper, and though my mother managed her own house, hers was a constitutional household, and she rarely did anything without consulting her prime minister, Mary, who represented the servants or the commons. So Mary had first been won over to come into the country, and then she had converted Thomas and the rest; and it was amusing, the morning after we came down, to hear her relating the difficulties of our position.

"It's very hard, ma'am, that people can't agree in being afeared of the same thing. Now there's Thomas, he is not one bit afeared of ghostesses. Thieves is what he's always dreaming about, lest they should rob the plate and cut his throat. But cook, she cares nothing for all the thieves in the world; it's ghostesses is what she is scared at, for

she do say an old house like this is always full of the ghostesses of those who have lived in it. 'Who can tell,' she were only saying last night, 'how many murders have been committed here, and how many skelingtons there mayn't be hid behind them panels in the wainscot, ready to jump out and grin at one, before you could say bo to a goose !' "

"What folly, Mary!" said my mother. "There is no more danger of thieves here than in town, and if they did come, Thomas is a man, and he has your master's gun."

"Which, ma'am, if he ever dared to fire it off, cook would go into fits and give warning."

"And as for ghosts and murders, they are neither of them so common that it is necessary to suppose that every old house has them."

"Oh dear, ma'am," said Mary, reproachfully, "what you says about murders is very true, I dare say. You need not live and end in a murder, but whoever lives must end in a ghost—the Bible says so—and seeing there's so many of 'em, they're very good not to show themselves oftener."

"Well, let us hope we shall see no ghosts in this house," said my mother, mournfully. "I often, though, wish we could."

Then Mary went on—

"But the most absurdest creature is Jane, the upper housemaid. It isn't thieves or ghostesses she cares for, but earwigs and spiders. In town it used to be blackbeetles, which crawled up her things and tickled her feet; but here it is earwigs and spiders, which do creep out of every hole and corner. She'll give warning, Jane will, if they're not abated."

"But neither of them do any harm, Mary," I put in.

"No harm, Master Frank! I'm not afeared on 'em, not I—but why say they do no harm? Why, I read in a book of travels that there's spiders in Borneo so big that they carry off a child from its own mother, and though they be black children, I suppose their mothers' hearts is white—and though they're not so big here, they have all the same spiteful ways, they'd run off with our children if they could. And then they're so untidy, spinning their nasty webs in every corner, far out of reach of brush or broom. And as for earwigs, they're more venomous than spiders, getting into people's ears and making them deaf and driving them mad."

"Why, Mary, don't you know a reward has been offered for any one who could prove that an earwig had ever crept into any man's or any

woman's ear? The thing's impossible, because the wax in the ear would poison the earwig."

"No, I don't, Master Frank! and, what's more, I don't believe it. All I know is, that there was a man in our parish which an earwig crept into his ear, and he suffered hagonies. Well, his friends wouldn't go to a doctor spending their money on his stuff all for nothing, so they went to the seventh son of a seventh son, for they, you know are all born 'wise.'" Here Mary dropped her voice, as though this wisdom were something too sacred almost to mention. "Well, what did the wise man do? He says at once, 'It's an earwig,' he says, 'and well it was you come to me, but I'll soon drive him out. Go, one of you, fasting, to a well where four roads meet, and drink three sups of it without drawing your breath, and then find an earwig in an apricot tree, and bring it to me without saying a word, and then I'll see what I can do.' So they went and did all the wise man said, and when they brought him the earwig, he corked it up in a hollow bit of an elder tree, and chucked it into the fire. 'Now,' he says, 'that t'other earwig'll soon come out. But you must take this cabbage leaf, and wrap it round the sick man's ear, and you'll soon see what you shall see.'"

"Well! and what did they see, Mary?"

"Why," said Mary, "when they took the cabbage-leaf off his ear next morning there was the earwig, alive and crawling, and the man's ear was well. And now don't ye go to tell me earwigs don't creep into people's ears."

"It came in the cabbage-leaf, Mary."

"It didn't, Master Frank!"

"And I say it did, and perhaps your wise man put it there."

"I'm sure he didn't," said Mary, angrily. "He'd have scorned the haction."

My mother now thought it was time to interfere.

"Stop, Mary," she said, "I don't think we shall see any ghosts; I hope we shall not find any thieves—so Thomas and cook may be easy! We'll do our best to get rid of spiders and earwigs, and make Jane comfortable; and if we can't, she must suit herself as to giving warning, for we can't leave the house to please her."

I could tell you a hundred other stories about our settling down, only I have no time. Suffice it to say that Jane did stay, and that we never had either thieves, or set eyes on one ghost during all our abode at Buttersteep. If there had been such things, I am sure they must have

come to visit us ; and it was the fact that they did not come when they had every cause, that has made me a disbeliever in them ever since I was twenty-five.

But though ghosts did not come, the neighbours did, and very like ghosts some of them looked. Some of them were pleasant and cheery enough, and I am grateful to them for making my mother's life tolerable when I was away at Oxford. But the greater part of them looked like fossils ; the men and women witnesses of the Deluge, who, somehow or other, except that they were not giants, had not gone into Noah's Ark with that patriarch, and yet had not been drowned in the Flood.

In that neighbourhood, there were old dowagers much worse than the old wives in the fairy tale, for *they* had one tooth or one eye between three of them, but these had not an eye or a tooth to bless themselves with, and yet they moved, and walked, and had their being among us just like any other Christians.

Then there were old maids, hungry for scandal, who had subsisted for years on the least bit of gossip, and still talked of the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, when William the Fourth was king, just as if it had been an affair of yesterday.

Then there were half-pay generals, and admirals, and colonels, and captains, who did nothing but growl about the army and navy, which they declared were going to the dogs, and who predicted that steam would never answer for long voyages. This was before the Great Western stopped their mouths, by steaming to America and back; but they had their excuse, those ridiculous old officers, for they did not talk more nonsense about ocean steaming than some of the most eminent engineers of the day. These poor old ruins of a bygone time only gave back the echoes of the voices which the wise men of the time uttered, so they had their excuse.

Then there were the aborigines and their wives, small country squires, who gave themselves airs, and looked down on the dowagers and old maids, and generals, admirals, colonels, and captains as insolent upstarts who had come and built houses in a district that did not need them, and raised the price of everything in all the markets.

It seemed never to occur to those silly rustics that these new comers, among whom we were included, though Buttersteep estate was much beyond the reach of the class in general, enabled them to ask better prices for their land when they were able to sell it, and for their produce,

and that if prices rose, they rose much more in the social scale, so that, from being starving squires, they had a chance, by prudence, of becoming comparatively wealthy.

But with this stiff-necked generation it was no use arguing; they had made up their mind to despise the new comers, though they were quite ready to dine with them whenever they were asked.

Such, with few exceptions, was the society into which we were banished. It certainly was not equal to the scenery, but for that and quiet my mother had come, and so long as she had me and her own bitter-sweet memories, she was quite happy in being mistress of Buttersteep, with its enchanting prospect.

Besides, we were to have Irwin with us soon. What a joy for me. As soon as he had broken the matter to his guardians, the old man and woman, by mutual jealousy of one another, thought it better that he should accept my mother's invitation.

"We might have Mary Ball down, too, at the same time, for a week or two," said my mother. "She is a nice girl."

"Oh, certainly," I said; "we shall all get on excellently together, and she will be some company for you, dear mother."

So my mother asked Mary, and Mary said that she would be very happy, and that her father begged her to say how very kind he thought it of Mrs. Franklin to ask her into the country. As for Mr. Ball himself, he hardly ever went away. Year out year in, he went off every day to Great St. Helen's, and as he scarcely ever trusted Mary out of his sight, she had not seen much of the country. It was a wonder to all of us how she grew up so tall and strong on town air alone.

In about three weeks we were settled—completely shaken down into our new abode. My mother walked about the garden and the plantations, fed her chickens, inspected the kitchen garden, and, in short, was as happy as any daughter of Eve could be who had lost her Adam out of this earthly paradise.

As for me, what did I do? I got up early and worked before breakfast; after breakfast I read again, having the fear of the Dean before my eyes in October. After luncheon, I walked about the country with my mother, or rode long distances on a pony which our coachman had bought at Blackwater fair. At this time we were without a carriage, and our horses ate the oats of idleness for a while. As soon as our coachman came, he said our old landau wasn't fit for the country, it

would break his "'osses' 'earts" to drag it about; and, in fact, he advised us to turn it, by a very expensive process, into a brougham and a "pheaton."

"Then you can go out to dinner in the bruffam, Master Frank, and in fine weather drive missus an hairing into the country."

After an interview with her banker's book, my mother took this advice. The landau was dragged off to be taken in exchange by the coachmaker, and in the meantime, till the new carriage came, we were carriageless.

Which came first of our visitors? Mary Ball.

I declare, of late years I had scarcely looked at her. I have described her long ago, so I need not repeat what she was like. But I may add that expression came with years to Mary, and made her more attractive. Yes, "attractive," was the word that people used about her. When she smiled at them, not one of the great army of fossils had the face, I will not say the heart, to find fault with her.

She came with her maid in the "Sloth" as far as Bagshot, and I met them at the great posting-house, so famous for its ham and veal pies in the old coaching days, and then, with many apologies for not having a carriage to meet her, I brought them over in a fly.

As we drove by Bagshot Park and Swinley Woods to Buttersteep, Mary was full of admiration at the beauty of the trees and the sweetness of the heather. As for her maid, she looked as frightened as though she had been landed on the shores of Nova Scotia or New Caledonia, and when I mentioned the word "forest," she turned up the whites of her eyes in such a way that I am sure she thought lions and tigers, or wolves at the very least, would rush out on us and rend us at any moment.

It is only about two miles and a bit from Bagshot to Buttersteep, and as the fly was not very slow, we got to our lodge gate in about half an hour. There we found my mother waiting to receive her guest.

As soon as Mary got out, my mother caught her in her arms, and gave her a kiss.

While this was going on, the maid, who was Mary's old nurse, just as our Mary was mine, said,

"Oh, Master Frank, how ever do you all live in this wild part?"

"Very well, I assure you, Elizabeth"—that was her name—"the wild beasts haven't eaten us up yet."

"Then there *are* wild beastesses here," said

Elizabeth, "and I was right when I telled Miss Mary so!"

"No, there are not; the only thing we suffer from is the blue devils, for want of company, Elizabeth."

"Ah! surely there must be a lot of them, too," she said; "but the beastesses is worse than the blues, I think."

Then my mother led Mary Ball up the road to the house, stopping every now and then to point out the beauty of the scenery, which filled her at every pause with delight. When they got to the porch my mother showed Mary to her room, which had much the same view as mine, only it was at the other end of the house, and there, with her terrified maid close to her, Mary took up her abode under our gables.

Two or three days after came Irwin. It was on the 30th of August, I remember. He came quite in another way. He took his place by the coach to Bagshot, but he wrote and told us that at Egham he should leave the Sloth and walk the rest of the way, leaving the Sloth to bring on his luggage to Bagshot. There was no use going to meet him, but we sent a man with a wheelbarrow to fetch his portmanteau, and every now and then looked down the straight bit of

road that led from what was then the Jim Crow public-house, to see if he were coming.

At last I saw him, ever so far off, striding along in all the bloom of health and youth, as tall as Sigurd, through the waving corn, and looking grand enough to slay any dragon.

"Dear old fellow! how are you?" he cried; "it seems such an age since we parted!" and then he gave me such a grip, which I need not say I returned to the full.

"And now tell me how you like it, and how is Mrs. Franklin?"

"Very well indeed, and we like it all very much, except the aborigines."

"Well, you know," he said with a laugh, "what always becomes of the aborigines. They vanish and hide their diminished heads before what is called the tide of civilization, and so I suppose it will be with you. They will come round you at first like the bees in the Psalms, and soon after will be as extinct as the fire among the thorns."

"By all which you mean, I suppose, that after their curiosity has been satisfied they will cease to visit us."

"Not at all," he cried, "for these, like all aborigines, must be first extinct themselves before the sacred fire of curiosity will be quenched

in their bosoms. Like gulls and savages they will continue to call on you, I predict, till the very end of the chapter. I only meant by extinct that the new comers would gradually improve the aborigines off the face of the land."

By this time we had reached the lodge, and our old gardener, whom we had imported, opened the side gate.

"What a jolly place," said Irwin; "and what a balmy smell of pine trees and heather."

In a few minutes we had climbed the hill, and found my mother and Mary Ball in the garden.

Irwin was an old friend to my mother, who always said she looked on him as another son; but to Mary, though she had seen him, he was almost strange. There the two met on that glorious summer evening, and in a moment they were friends.

When we were washing our hands for dinner, for there was no time for dress, Irwin said,

"How pretty Miss Ball has grown!"

"Has she!" I repeated, and said not another word. It seemed a matter of indifference to me so long as Irwin was by, whether all the women in the world had improved in looks or not.

I am not about to weary you with all that we said or did in those happy weeks. The longer Mary Ball stayed the better pleased my mother

seemed to be, and the better her father up in town. We soon had that "pheaton" from town, and then I drove my mother and the rest all about that beautiful country. I do not think we left a corner or a nook of it unexplored, and Sandhurst, Windsor, Eton, not to mention the Forest and Virginia Water and its woods, were visited over and over again. We had keys, too, of all the private gates and drives—how we got them I really forget, but rangers were not then so stingy in bestowing them as they are now. We had picnics to Cæsar's Camp and Bramshill Park and the King's Beech, which was not so far from Buttersteep, and when we had exhausted the beauties of the neighbourhood, though they seemed to be endless, we used to spend the day out on our own butts and knolls, gazing at the landscape, and laughing to see the rabbits come frisking out of the plantations to feed as the sun grew low.

So those weeks rolled away happily. We were all great friends, and I really think that as Irwin was in despair at returning to Ireland to become a bone of contention or apple of discord to his two guardians, so Mary Ball, though she loved her father dearly, would have been well content to pass all her life at Buttersteep House.



CHAPTER XII.

MR. CHRYSOSTOM AND MR. BALL MEET.

AT last I really believe old Ball's paternal feelings got disturbed. At any rate he wrote to my mother, and said in such very marked terms that he would like to pay us a visit and bring Mary back, that my mother could do nothing else but write and ask him to come and spend a few days.

"He won't come for more than a Saturday and Sunday, I am sure," said Mary, "for he never stays away from business longer than that."

But Mary Ball was wrong. Her father wrote by return of post, and said that circumstances permitted him to take a little relaxation, and so, if Mrs. Franklin would allow him, he would come and stay with us a week.

Now I must say that even to my sanguine

temperament a week of old Ball seemed rather too much of a treat.

"Whatever are we to do with him?" I asked my mother.

"My dear," she replied, "Mr. Ball is a man of great resources: we will try to amuse him as much as we can, and when we leave off he must amuse himself."

"I am sure," said Mary Ball to Irwin, one day in the bower in the garden, "papa will find it very dull down here."

"Why should he?" asked Irwin; "we don't find it dull."

"Ah! but, you see, papa is so very different from you and Mr. Franklin. He cares for nothing but business, and as for you two, I think you care for nothing but pleasure, and that I think so new and so nice."

"That, Miss Ball," said Irwin, "is because you see us in our holidays. If you had only seen us working last half, or if you could come and see us at Oxford, you would see we both worked quite as hard as your father, only in a different way."

"And do you make much money?" asked Mary very innocently.

"No! I am afraid not," said Irwin; "we only

spend it. Boys spend, you know, what men make. But I dare say all in good time we shall both make money, if we live long enough."

"Papa says he is never happy unless he is making money," said Mary. "He says the day is lost without it."

"Different men have different opinions, Miss Ball. For myself, if some one had made it for me, I think I should like to spend it."

"I wonder," said Mary, musing, "for whom papa is saving up all his money?"

"For some college or charity, no doubt," said Irwin, who was afraid of falling into a trap.

"Why not for me?" said Mary, quickly.

"Why not, indeed?" said Irwin. "Far better to give it to one's own flesh and blood than to any charity."

"Then why did you put it into my head?" said Mary.

"Why did you ask me," said Irwin, "for whom he was saving it? It was an idle question."

"So it was," said Mary; "and now let us talk no more about it."

So we all expected Mr. Ball in a day or two, wondering what in the world we should do with him, quite as much, in fact, as Mary wondered what he would do with his money which he slaved so hard to get.

But the very next day came another letter, which made most of us feel easier. This was from Mr. Chrysostom, who had come up to town from Hastings, whither he had been sent by his tormentors, the doctors, and in it he said the weather was so warm and fine, that, if we had room for him, he would come and stay a few days with us from such a day, naming the very day that Mr. Ball had fixed for his arrival.

"How lucky!" said my mother, as she threw the letter across the breakfast table to me.

"What fun!" I cried, as I told Irwin. "Fancy, Mr. Chrysostom is coming, too."

"That will be charming," said Irwin.

"How provoking you all are!" said Mary. "What is lucky, and what is fun, and what is charming? I should like to know."

"It is always lucky and funny and charming to have a nice man in the house, Miss Ball, and it is all the more lucky that this charming friend is coming on the very day that Mr. Ball proposes to come."

"It will be so nice," said my mother, after breakfast, when we were alone, "for he will talk to Mr. Ball, and they will amuse one another."

Irwin and I drove over to meet them on the afternoon of the day fixed. They both came

down in that sultry weather inside the coach—Mr. Chrysostom because the doctors would not hear of his travelling outside, and Mr. Ball, as he declared, to escape the sun and dust. They were neither of them men to sit cheek by jowl with another for hours in a coach without saying a word, and so, as was natural, they had become acquainted on the way down.

“A very charming man, my dear young friend,” whispered Mr. Ball, as I was looking after his portmanteau.

I was eager to know what Mr. Chrysostom thought of the “contractor,” but he was not at all the man even to whisper his opinion of any one so soon. He was very polite to Mr. Ball, and very affectionate to me and Irwin, but he said nothing at all about the charms of his companion in the coach.

When we reached Buttersteep, Mr. Ball was in such raptures that he could scarce find time to kiss Mary. Mr. Chrysostom was not so demonstrative as to the beauties of Buttersteep, but one could see by the quiet enjoyment of his eye that he took in the whole landscape with intense delight, and that the charms of nature were with him not things to talk and dilate upon, but to inspire and feel. Most women are demonstrative,

and some of them are so given to this that they can never pass five minutes without saying, "How delightful!" and "How enchanting!" My mother had as little of this as any woman, but still she was a woman, and I am afraid she thought Mr. Chrysostom's manner rather cold compared with the warmth of Mr. Ball's admiration.

"I am so glad you like the place," she said. "Don't you think I was quite right to buy it?"

"There can be no doubt of that," said Mr. Ball. "It is not indeed so good a speculation as the *Barbarossa*—which, by the way, has just paid another dividend—but, considering the famine price of land in the home counties, it must be admitted that you made a most fortunate purchase. You could always part with it at an advance."

"That's what Mr. Fiveoaks says," said my mother. "But, see, there's Mary waiting to see you, and you have never a word for the poor child."

Thus exhorted, Mr. Ball proceeded to give Mary his kiss and his blessing, and then, turning to my mother, hoped Mary had behaved well, just, as Irwin said, as though she were a little baby that knew no better.

All this time Mary stood pouting and blushing,

as though her father did really think her the infant that Irwin supposed.

As for Mr. Chrysostom, he stood leaning against our big Scotch fir, round which the sweep up to the house turned, and was quite lost in thought, far away beyond Guildford and the Hog's Back, lost in the wondrous beauty of the sunset, which shed a golden glow on every object far and near.

"How very lovely! how exquisite!" he murmured to himself; not out loud, *ad populum*, like old Ball, but from and to his heart alone.

"Let us go in to dress for dinner," said my mother; "there goes the gong," for I need not tell you that Thomas would no more have left that gong, which was as a Teraphim to him, behind him in London, than he would have left his head or his blacking brushes.

At dinner it was easy to see that while Mr. Chrysostom was quite at his ease, Mr. Ball was not at all so. I fancy he thought he was coming down to be king of the company, but if so, he was quite mistaken. There was a quiet force and a playful satire about Mr. Chrysostom which made him very formidable in conversation if he chose, and over and over again I have seen him lead presuming people on as though they were following some one very simple-minded, and when he

had got them far enough, he would turn round and expose their ignorance in a way at once so gentle and so amusing, that it added tenfold to the ignominy of the defeat.

At first Mr. Ball made what many people call play at a great rate. He talked of this and that in a random sort of way, and it was not till Mr. Chrysostom put his paw down upon him in every flight, that he began to feel something like a salmon hooked and held by a single hair, and who, in spite of all his efforts to break loose, is still held fast. Thus, if he went into the world of politics, he found that where he put words Mr. Chrysostom was ready with ideas. If he talked of literature, there, too, Mr. Chrysostom had the better of him, and in social matters and questions it was much the same. In all these he felt the butt of the rod, and had to turn.

In this way the conversation degenerated into a sort of Socratic dialogue, in which Mr. Ball was reduced to as many "certainlys," and "of courses," and "why nots," as the antagonists of Socrates in the *Phædo*.

At last he bethought him of betaking himself to his own dunghill the City, and began to talk with an air of great authority on finance and the laws of exchange, and our gold currency. For a

while Mr. Chrysostom let him have it all his own way ; he was like an angler allowing a big fish to run down stream a bit till he came to a good landing-place. But all at once when Mr. Ball had committed himself to several desperate heresies in monetary matters, and had rung the changes on the old question of " what is a pound ? " Mr. Chrysostom turned on him and routed him in a way that reminded one only of Sir Robert Peel rending Mr. Edward Taunton in later years.

In his vexation Mr. Ball could only exclaim—

" Why, where in the world did you, a clergyman, learn all this ? "

" Ah ! " said Mr. Chrysostom, " I see you think the maxim is invariable, ' Once a clergyman always a clergyman,' but you don't know that before I was a parson I was secretary to a Parliamentary Commission on the Bank Charter Act, and, if you must know, that is how I learnt the little which I confess I do know on the Currency Question."

After that defeat Mr. Ball drew in his horns, and pursued a waiting game. The conversation became more general, and as the two men had taken one another's measure, and Mr. Chrysostom had established his superiority, there were no more disputes between them that day. Added

to which, as I have said, even Mr. Chrysostom's severest sayings appeared to flow from him so reluctantly; he never seemed to resort to them except at the latest possible moment for his own justification, and when he said them, he uttered them so gently and in such a conciliatory tone, that even those he routed and overthrew hip and thigh, could not find it in their hearts to find fault either with his facts or with his way of stating them.

"What a wonderful lawyer your friend would make," said Mr. Ball to my mother. "What a pity it is that orders are like marking ink, indelible. Our friend Vowells would soon give him briefs enough to make his fortune; and this is the way in which some of the finest intellects of the century are wasted by that first false step into orders, which they find it impossible to retrace in after life."

"But Mr. Chrysostom has no wish to retrace his steps," said my mother; "besides, he did not take orders so very soon. You know he was secretary to that Currency Commission, and it was there that he acquired that knowledge which stood him in such good stead in his arguments with you at dinner."

The rest of the evening Mr. Chrysostom spent

with us, the younger ones, at the end of the drawing-room, where the piano was. He was very fond of music, and his own Susannah was a great performer. Mary Ball's education had not been neglected in this respect. She had a good ear and touch, and had been well taught. All that evening she played and sung to us, except when Irwin, who, I really believe, could do anything under the sun, relieved her.

And so the first day of the meeting of these men came to an end, and we all went up to bed and slept, I hope all of them as soundly as I did.

Of course during Mr. Ball's stay we showed him and Mr. Chrysostom all the lions. As we had found them out first for ourselves, we now acted as showmen and guides. The weather was so fine and warm that it would have satisfied even Mr. Chrysostom's doctor. But I must say, like most consumptive people that I have known, he was very imprudent as to exposure. The only time I ever heard of him as taking care of himself was when he came down inside the coach with Mr. Ball.

But the only one of our outings which I care to tell you about was a picnic which we had to Virginia Water. It wasn't such a customary

thing then as it is now, for you know there was no railway.

I remember we sat with our baskets close to the ruins and columns on the bank, which the taste of George the Fourth had erected. Somehow in our expeditions Mr. Chrysostom and Irwin and I fell together by natural selection, or elective affinity, or whatever it would now be the fashion to call it, but what would then have been known as a liking for one another. Mr. Ball was assiduous in his attention to my mother, and Mary belonged to neither group, but was ready to mix with either.

And so, while old Ball was telling my mother some wonderful stories about our investments, Mr. Chrysostom looked up at the marble above our heads and said,

“Quanto præstantius esset
Numen aquæ, viridi si margine clauderet undas
Herba, nec ingenuum violarent marmora tophum.”

There, do you know where that comes from, Frank?”

“Juvenal,” I said; “but where I do not know.”

“Oh! but I do,” said Irwin, and then he began a little further back than where Mr. Chrysostom had begun, and quoted,

“‘In vallem Egeriæ descendimus et speluncas
Dissimiles veris.’

After that comes ‘Quanto præstantius esset.’”

“Quite right, Irwin,” said Mr. Chrysostom, with a true appreciation of his memory. “I ought to have begun where you did, for certainly these grottoes are anything but true grottoes,” and then he went on: “What misguiding things quotations are, and how many fallacies have been bolstered up by them. Take Pope’s

“‘A little learning is a dangerous thing,’

how many times has that not been cited as telling against all education by people who have stopped short and not gone on to complete it by

“‘Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,’

when the whole passage becomes an exhortation to serious study as opposed to a superficial smattering.

“Yes!” he said, looking at us both in a melancholy way, “how happy you two ought to be with life and the world before you to work in with all your souls and strength, and not forced, as I have been all my life, to compass sea and land, not to make one proselyte but to save my

own life. Consumptive people are like criminals, and criminals condemned for no fault of their own, to fly their native land."

And then, shaking off that weight of sadness, he became as brilliant as ever, and told us of many things which he had seen in the course of his wanderings. The negroes in the West Indies, the monks and invalids of Madeira, the friars in Italy, and the lazzaroni at Naples all came into his story. He told us, too, of art. We might paint in England, he thought, but the character of the people and the church was against Sculpture, except as monuments in churches, where, as he put it, "one naturally looks to be frozen and petrified."

"No!" he broke out; "no one can know what sculpture is, and how marble can be made to breathe, till he goes to a warm country. Even when I go to the British Museum to see the Elgin Marbles or the Towneley Venus, I always feel as if I should like to put them into flannel, they seem so starved with cold. But go to Rome, and still more to Athens, and you will see at once that their proper place is out in the open air. I shouldn't class them, though," he went on, "as they are arranged in the 'Groves of Blarney':—

“‘Plato, Petrarch, and Nebuchadnezzar,
All standing naked in the open air,’

but I can very well see that in no place could the sculptures of Phidias, even in their mutilation, be seen to more advantage than in the Parthenon, on that Acropolis which his genius so glorified that even in its ruins it seems a God-like work.”

“Why not restore them, then?” said Irwin.

“No, no!” said Mr. Chrysostom, “I am not going to abuse Lord Elgin for saving those statues’ lives, as the Irishman said. Greece had them long enough, and we, if we cannot make them, can at least keep them safe, and show the world what sculpture was. Had they stayed where they were they would all have been pounded to death in the siege, which happened after Lord Elgin’s time. You know, I dare say, both of you, that there are many things of which the owners are not worthy, and the best art is not how to get a thing or have a thing, but how to use it properly. I remember once, when I was on the Black Sea, going from Constantinople to Trebizond on a sort of wandering in the steps of the ‘Ten Thousand,’ that I met a Circassian chief, not more savage than the rest of his race, who had among his luggage a whole bale of

Testaments in the Circassian dialect. How he got them I do not know. Probably from some one of our Bible societies. Well, being both good sailors, and he talking some French, we got intimate on the voyage, and he told me many things about his people and the struggle with Russia, which was then very bitter. On the last day, when he was still full of the war, and how high the hopes of the Circassians were, I said something, I admit, in a missionary mood.

“‘But I am glad to see that war is not the sole object of your flight to Circassia. You can fight bravely we all know, but still it is evident you can pray, and pray like Christians are taught, else why all these Bibles and Prayer-books in your baggage?’ I shall never forget the haughty air with which he replied, ‘We Circassians are of the creed of the Prophet, and as for these books of which you speak, their covers make excellent cartouch-boxes, and as soon as I get to Poti the insides will be torn out and the outsides will go to the war and smell powder.’”

“How shocking,” I cried.

“Very,” said Mr. Chrysostom, “and it is only another proof of what I said, that the great thing in life is not only how to get a thing, but how to make a good use of it when you have got it.”

"Mr. Chrysostom," said my mother, "we must be getting home, the dew is falling fast, and we have a long drive."

"Oh!" said Irwin, "you see Mrs. Franklin has not only got a good thing, but values it and knows how to use it, for the worst use it seems to me to which you can put a friend is to expose him, for your own pleasure, to the risk of catching his death of cold."

"But suppose he likes it," said Mr. Chrysostom.

"Then he ought not to like it," said Irwin, "and on his part it is an error of judgment. No man has a right to throw away his life."

"Not if he thinks he has done all the work he is fit for and can do no more?" said Mr. Chrysostom.

"How can he know that?" said Irwin. "That, too, is in the lap of the gods, as the ancients said."

"Yes, life is a riddle," murmured Mr. Chrysostom.

Perhaps if he had lived in these days he would have called it a double acrostic, too hard for anyone to solve.

So we went home. I remember it was Mr. Ball's last day, and Mary was to go back with him, and the day after Irwin and Mr. Chrysostom

were to go together, for Susannah had written from Hastings to reclaim the one, holding the wrath of the doctors over her husband's head; and Irwin's guardians were getting so impatient to see him again, that the uncle, who had never left the Queen's County to go farther than Dublin, declared that in a week he would be coming over to fetch him back.

But before they went Mr. Chrysostom and Mr. Ball had another engagement.

"When you were in the West Indies," said Mr. Ball—"I heard you talking to-day of the negroes—did you go to Mexico?"

Now, I verily believe that old Ball thought he was going to have a break, as they call it at billiards, on Mexico. He fancied that on that table-land he would have it all his own way. But he was mistaken, for Mr. Chrysostom simply said—

"Yes! I was a long time in Mexico."

"Oh! do tell us about it," said my mother, "we take such an interest in it."

"Naturally," said Mr. Chrysostom, glancing at Mr. Ball.

"Were you ever in the silver mining districts?" said that gentleman.

"Yes," said Mr. Chrysostom, "I went up there

some years ago to San Luis de Potosi with an engineer who was sent out to make some inquiries about mines, and in particular to inquire about the famous 'La Luz' vein."

Here I fancied that Mr. Ball looked a little scared, and perhaps he wished he had never carried the war of words into that table-land. But he had to say something, and so he asked, "And what did his inquiries come to?"

"Well! you know I am not a mining engineer," said Mr. Chrysostom, "I take very little interest in the subject, but my friend did, and I am bound to say that he came to the conclusion, that though some of the old Mexican mining companies, as the Real del Monte and United Mexican, were *bonâ fide* concerns, even in them most of the profits went to the Mexicans; and as for the new companies about to be started, they were all moonshine."

"All moonshine!" said Mr. Ball; "you amaze me. But I see this was some time ago. Silver mining has improved since you were in Mexico, and the new processes enable us to extract much more of the ore, and so to utilize property formerly worthless."

"But what of the 'La Luz' vein?" asked my mother, rather anxiously, which I could not un-

derstand at the time, but afterwards she told me that it was the discovery of this very vein both in the Barbarossa and the Del Demonio concessions which made both of them able to pay such dividends.

"If I remember right," said Mr. Chrysostom, "my friend said that the La Luz vein was a phantom which had been used from time immemorial to lure people on to mine in Mexico. All he could discover about it was, that it had been a most argentiferous vein, if I may use such a word, centuries ago, but that it was believed to be worked out. But having been so famous every new speculator—and every one speculates in mining in Mexico, it is the only industry of the country—tried to make out that the La Luz vein had like the Arethusa of the ancients dived down and disappeared in one mine only to re-appear in another. Then, assuming in his prospectus that he had struck it, or that it could be struck, he sat down and calculated how many tons of solid silver it would produce in a given area, and then he started his company, and if possible sold it in England, and brought it out at a premium."

"Dear me, how shocking," said my mother, "and how fortunate it is, Mr. Ball, that both in

the *Barbarossa* and the *Del Demonio* we have actually struck this vein of silver, this coy Mexican *Arethusa*."

"Most fortunate indeed," said Mr. Ball, who now turned short round on Mr. Chrysostom, and asked if he had ever been in Brazil.

"No," said Mr. Chrysostom, "nor in Greenland either." Whether he said this by chance, or had heard of the Graphite Company, I cannot tell, but I thought Mr. Ball winced, and this gave Mr. Chrysostom an opportunity of saying, "But I have still something left to tell of Mexico. When I and my friend were there he had propositions made to him by several Boards of native Mexicans, all men, he was assured, of the highest honour and probity, to take specimens over to Europe, on the faith of which companies might be started, and the public inveigled. Many and many a mine, he said, had never an ounce of silver in it except the specimen on which the company was started, and even that, in ninety-nine times out of a hundred, had been brought from an old established mine, and buried in the new concession only to be dug up again."

"This friend of yours," said Mr. Ball, in his oiliest way, from which it was plain that he had now recovered his composure, "must have

seen a deal of villainy in his time. What a witness he would make! Where is he to be found?"

"Where we shall all one day stand—before the judgment-seat of God," said Mr. Chrysostom, solemnly. "He died of yellow fever at Vera Cruz while we were waiting for the steamer, and as to his report, which I have no doubt his widow now has, for, after all, it was not so long ago that I was sent to sail about the Caribbean Sea for my health, all I know is, that when I last heard from her, she said the parties who had sent her husband out had never paid her a sixpence for the labour which cost him his life."

"Perhaps," said Irwin, "it did not suit them to have it published. He was too honest."

"Yes," said Mr. Chrysostom, in his abstracted way, as though he were talking to himself, "I often wonder how strangely unprovidential life seems to be, and, indeed, it requires all our faith sometimes to justify the ways of God to man."

Then it was, as his eye seemed fixed on space, that Mr. Ball whispered to my mother—

"What a wonderful knowledge and experience our friend has!"

"Yes, indeed," said my mother; "but I cannot help repeating that we can never be sufficiently thankful that our investments are not

based on such false reports and schemes as those Mr. Chrysostom talks of."

"Quite so! quite so!" said Mr. Ball; "and now I think we have had enough of mining, though I own I never thought it possible there could be such roguery in the world."

By this time Mr. Chrysostom was awake to the world again. He left the table, and we four, that is, Mary Ball, Mr. Chrysostom, Irwin, and myself, walked out in the sweet summer night in the garden, counting the shooting stars which at that time of the year are not uncommon.

"Yes," said Mr. Chrysostom, as a bright one shot down from the zenith; "there, they say in some countries, goes the soul of an unbaptized child, but philosophers tell us they are only little worlds shot off or generated in space, which, becoming cool when retarded by our dull atmosphere, blaze up and burn themselves out, or fall in pieces as meteoric stones. Share which belief you will, the poetic or the prosaic; and now let us go to bed, and dream prose or poetry, as our nature guides us."

As we went into the house we found Mr. Ball going up to bed with a handful of letters. I have no doubt now, that one of them was addressed to Mr. Vowells, in Gray's Inn, though I did not see it at the time.



CHAPTER XIII.

MR. CHRYSOSTOM TELLS A STORY.

NEXT day Mr. Ball and Mary went away. In the afternoon Irwin and I and Mr. Chrysostom took a walk through Swinley, and there, under the broad oaks, Irwin asked him why he had said the day before that life was such a riddle.

"I can best show what I mean by telling you an old story," said Mr. Chrysostom, "and here it is:—

" 'There was a hermit once who spent his life in prayer and almsgiving, and near his cell was a shepherd who faithfully kept his master's sheep. One night a robber came and stole the sheep, and in the morning came the master, who, in a rage at the loss, slew the shepherd. When the hermit saw this he said, "Why does God suffer this in-

justice? I will pray, and fast, and relieve the poor no more, but return to the world and live like other men."

"So he left his cell and set out, and on his way he met a man, who said, "Friend, whither goest thou?" "To such and such a city." "I will go with thee," said the man, "for I am God's angel." So they journeyed together, and when they reached the city they were honourably received by a knight, and at a splendid banquet a golden cup was brought out, from which the knight and his guests drank. In the morning, when they rose to depart, the angel stole the golden cup. When the hermit saw this, he said, "Can this be the angel of God? This knight treated us nobly, and in return his cup is stolen."

"They journeyed on, and next night they came to the castle of another knight, and when they besought him for shelter against the wild beasts for the sake of God, he put them into one of his pigsties, other shelter and other food they might not have. Next morning, when they rose to depart, the angel took out the golden cup and gave it to their churlish host. "Surely," said the hermit to himself, "this can never be God's angel," but he went on with him, saying nothing, for he was afraid of him.

“They had not gone far before they came to a bridge over a river, and on the bridge they met a beggar, to whom the angel said, “Friend, show us the way to such and such a city.” So the beggar turned and pointed with his finger towards the city; but when his back was turned, the angel took him by the shoulders and pushed him over the bridge into the river, and he was drowned. “Now,” said the hermit, “I know he must be the devil, and no angel of God. The beggar did him a kindness and no harm, and lo! he has thrown him into the river and drowned him.” And he made up his mind to part company with him.

“Next night they came to another castle, where a third knight treated them with all honour, and made them a feast. That knight had an only son, an infant in his cradle, and at dead of night the angel of God rose and strangled him in his cradle. When the hermit saw that, he said, “Of a truth thou art the devil, and no God’s angel. I will no longer be thy companion; we must part.”

““Let us part,” said the angel; “but first hear what I have to say. Know that the shepherd whom his master slew had been wicked, but was then in a state of grace. Had he not died

then he would have committed mortal sin. He is now in heaven, and his master repenteth him of his angry deed and will be saved. The robber who stole the sheep will go to hell, unless he also repent. The first knight from whom I stole the cup was fond of his plate and his worldly gear, and especially of that cup out of which he drank immoderately, so that he was in danger of losing his soul. Now that he has lost his cup he will set his affections on imperishable things. That churlish knight to whom I gave the cup was in danger of losing his soul through covetousness and want of generosity. That unlooked-for gift has brought him to a better frame of mind, and he will now be kind and generous. That beggar was fit to die. He spent his life here in misery; he is now with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. There remains the child. Know that before that boy was born his father was full of almsgiving and works of mercy, but since his birth he has become careless, making an idol of his child. God has taken him. They will meet in heaven. Meanwhile the father will worship God alone. For the future, therefore, take heed to thy tongue and blame not God, for He knows all things, and what is best and right for every man."

"There," said Mr. Chrysostom; "with all its almsgiving and works of mercy and priestly absolution, there is a good deal in that Monkish story from the *Gesta Romanorum*. In many things the ways of God to man are dark, and need all our faith to reconcile them. But they can only be reconciled in the belief that this world is but a passage to another, and a better one. Were it not for that faith our journey here would be dark indeed, and as it is, it is sad blindfold work.

"Look at me," he went on, "never able to find a resting-place for the sole of my foot, buffeted about till I can find no abiding-place on earth. What right have you boys to better health and strength than I, and yet you have it."

"Ay," said Irwin, "but our lives may be short and miserable, even though we are as strong as lions, for happiness does not depend on strength of arm, but on a quiet and contented heart, and unhappiness comes also from within.

"*'Intus et in jecore ægro
Nascuntur domini,'*"

he burst out, quoting from old "Crabstick Parisius," as Queen Elizabeth called him.

When he had ended, Mr. Chrysostom gazed at

him with all the tenderness of a father, and said,

"I would give a good deal, Irwin, to be going up as you are to Oxford in all the strength of your mind and body. You ought to do the day's work of a giant."

"Ah!" said Irwin, with a laugh, "but that all means that having had your cake you would like to eat it over again, which would be hardly fair to the rising generation. No! life is like a bee-sting, it can only be used once, and there an end."

"Well! well!" said Mr. Chrysostom, "we shall see all in good time. As for me, with one lung gone, and another seriously attacked, I may go any day, but you are both young and strong, and, barring accidents, might do many things which I have neither power, nor time, nor health to work out. Promise me that you will both work, and if anything does go very wrong with you in after life, and you are just losing heart, think of the story of the hermit and of him who told it you under these oaks. Long before that may come, this head will be laid low enough. But come, we have moralized enough, let us make haste home, lest Mrs. Franklin should fancy that any harm has befallen us."

As we climbed the hill, he took me by the hand and said, "Do not suppose that what I said to Irwin was not equally meant for you. You, you know, are my first love, my oldest friend of the two. His nature is more demonstrative than yours; you want the spur, and he the rein."





CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THEY WENT AWAY, AND OF GRIMDITCH.

NEXT day was really Black Monday, not that it was really Monday, that I know, but whatever day it was its colour was black, because on that day I lost Irwin, and with him Mr. Chrysostom.

At that time of my life, friendship, as I have told you, was enough for me, and if I have not told you all my love for Irwin, it is rather because I wished you to guess it.

As the day before the Sloth had carried off from Bagshot Mary Ball and her father, so that day it swallowed up Irwin and Mr. Chrysostom, and became, as it were, to me a monster of romance, which every day demanded fresh victims. It was literally true, that it swallowed Mary and her father, because old Ball would go inside,

though Mary would have given her eyes, bright as they were, to have gone outside.

"No, no, my dear," he said; "it is not respectable for a young lady to be seen outside a coach," and so she was immured in the musty old inside seat of the Sloth.

But when Mr. Chrysostom and Irwin went, our consumptive friend ought, by all the decrees of his doctor, to have chosen the inside, but he snapped his fingers at them, and sat behind the coachman with Irwin.

I saw them off two days running, in two batches, and when the last had gone, I felt very lonely. The last words that Irwin said were: "We shall meet at Oxford in October, not much more than a month off," and Mr. Chrysostom's last words were, "I hope you will now read a little, Frank. Remember the maxim—

"‘No day without a line
Makes a man a scholar fine.’"

So I returned to Buttersteep and tried to read, but it was no use trying that day, all the letters seemed turned upside down. If I wrote some Latin, the ink would no more flow than my thoughts, so I loitered about till luncheon, and then went out and shot four birds out of the

two covies of partridges which were bred on our land.

I do not think I have yet introduced you to Grimditch, our gardener and bailiff, and as he is well worth knowing, I will do so at once.

Let me say of him in the beginning that he was not at all as other gardeners are—cross and ill-mannered, and often ignorant. Ignorant he was in one sense. He had no book-learning; so little indeed that he could only read a very little, and he could not sign his own name!

Poor fellow! I remember well how, soon after we came down, my mother, who had written to him several times, was deploring the ignorance of some one she had heard of in the neighbourhood who could neither read nor write. And then she went on:

“So different from you, Grimditch, who write such good letters, and so well expressed.”

But Grimditch was an honest man; he was not going to take refuge behind his wife’s petticoat, as many a man of more education would have done. So when my mother praised him in this way, he bowed and said,

“It was not me, ma’am; it was the missus.”

And then it came out that all the scholarship in the family was possessed by the wife. Fancy

what power that might give a wife over her husband, who must come to her, not only to write but to read his letters for him. Yet I am bound to say that in no one instance did I hear of Mrs. Grimditch abusing her authority and treating her husband in any other way than as a loving, faithful wife.

In these days, of course, such a phenomenon as a man who cannot read and write seems impossible. But in those, not only did Grimditch get on admirably without book-learning, but I believe he was better without it than many a man who has it.

The fact was that he was a splendid example of what good mother-wit and experience and observation can do ; and, of course, if one thinks of it, since many more millions and billions and quadrillions of the inhabitants of this earth must have done very well without reading or writing, and yet achieved excellence and distinction, why should not an intellectual man do many things amazingly well without them ? Certainly our Grimditch could do so. Being left to eye and memory alone, it was wonderful how accurate and perfect he was in applying what may be called his rule of thumb to everything.

If you wished to know the quantity of land in

a field—and I needn't tell you that to the ignorant in such matters the most deceptive thing on earth is an acre of land—Grimditch would tell it you to a pole; or if you wished to know how many shrubs would be required to fill a belt or plantation, he could tell you, by merely looking at the spot, the exact number. In planting trees, such as fruit trees in an orchard, he would dig holes, without rule or line, so straight and true that you might have fancied they were drilled in by a machine.

Besides this, he was a good judge of a horse or a cow or a pig when he saw them. Some people only know that such and such a quadruped is a horse or a cow or a pig, as the case may be, but Grimditch knew at a glance whether it was young or old, whether it were well or ill bred, whether it had been properly taken care of; and, in fact, he could tell merely from the look of them, not only what they were, but what soil they had come off. One merit he had, and one, alas! which is fast dying out. He knew the dignity of good work, and was not above doing it himself.

"There's many that talk of ploughing," he used to say, "whose hands never touched a plough tail, and there's many that talk of digging

whose palms never handled a spade. Look here, Master Frank, this is the way to do it," and then he would turn a furrow, and trench a bit of land, so neatly and handily, it was a joy to behold him. He knew, too, all the names of birds and flowers. Not the jawbreaking botanical ones, but the sweet old country names; and when I called the green woodpeckers that abound in Berkshire by that name, he said—

"That we called a 'yaffle,' Master Frank, because it 'yaffles' as it flies. Hark to him now, how he laughs as he crawls up yon tree."

His diction was wonderful, and often wonderfully good Saxon, putting to shame our new-fangled English.

"Come under the hill," he would say when the wind was cold; "it's 'burrow' there." And when I asked what "burrow" meant, or "burrower" and "burrowest," for he used all the degrees of comparison, he could only answer, "Out of the way of the wind," but what he really meant was "sheltered."

So it was with "hish" and "hern," true old provincial forms; and in the "they" for "these," as "they wissells," by which he meant, "those mangold wurzels," and then he would talk of "neasons" for "nests," and "mewing" for

"mowing," as, "Bill mewed over a neason of partridges."

So that, with his mother-wit, and knowledge all acquired by experience and observation, he was in his vocation and calling a most valuable and withal amusing and instructive man.

Nor was Mrs. Grimditch far behind him. She had the book-learning, but, as she used to say—

"What's the use of learning without sense? Grimditch is a deal better without his learning than a many that has it and can't hold a candle to him in doing his work."

There never was such a woman for plants and simples. She knew the "virtues," as they would have called it in old time, of every plant that grew in wood or field, and, except that she was good-looking, would have been burnt for a witch in the dark ages.

Whenever any one was ill, she brewed them a drink, which Grimditch always declared was so much better than all "they doctor's drugs, that if all the world knowed of it, Mr. Squills might as well shut up shop."

All the men about the place believed firmly in this, and as faith is nine-tenths of a cure, Mrs. Grimditch cured them on the spot. I dare say, like all physick, her remedy was so nasty that

her patients did not care to try it a second time, but, anyhow, they said they were cured, and went about their work, both which are more than most people can say who have been under a local doctor's hands.

But neither my mother nor I allowed Mrs. Grimditch to physic us. We neither took her potions nor the doctors', and so we were always well and hearty.

Our great concern with her was the care she took of our poultry, of which she was a most successful rearer. Somehow or other, our hens always began to lay earlier than those of any of the aborigines. We had our spring chickens and ducks earlier, and they were fatter. Turkeys, too, we had in plenty, that great crux of poultry rearers. If our hens sat on twelve eggs, they did not come off with one chick. And though we had occasional accidents, as when a fox came and slew a turkey mother and ten young ones—very much like Reynard the fox in the *Beast Epic*—at one fell swoop, yet, year out year in, we were most successful, and the admiration and envy of the neighbours.

When my mother asked Mrs. Grimditch how she managed it, her answer was worthy of herself and her husband, and was conveyed very much in a didactic form.

"Chicken"—mark, she said *chicken*—"chicken, ma'am, can't wait for their breakfast."

By which she meant that, unless you got up early and fed your fowls, and particularly the young ones, you need not expect to rear poultry.

And while we are on the subject of poultry, let me remark what a percentage of poultry reared and eaten ought to be represented by the fowl who have escaped that terror of our infancy, the kite. Time was when that yellow-footed, forked-tailed hawk used to swoop down and carry off chickens innumerable. Where is he now? Let game-keepers answer where? I suppose if you gave a reward of a thousand pounds in some counties you would not find a kite-slayer coming to claim it. The last I saw were in Wales, five of them together, sitting gorged on a rock, not far from Capel Curaig. But that was a long time ago, and certainly in Berkshire they have been unknown for years and years.

And so I went shooting, and found Grimditch down in the bottom, near the butts, where he helped me to beat a fine field of swedes, of which he was very proud.

We soon found the birds. I shot two, and then another two; and after that they flew on the Crown land which touched ours, and I would have fol-

lowed them, only I did not know whether the maxim "follow your birds" held good with the royal domains.

While I was deliberating, Grimditch came up and said,

"No, no! *They* keepers give us trouble enough with their nasty rabbits, which they breed to devour our wizzels. They'll be down on us with some complaint if you follow your birds, though I've seen them come on our land a-followin' of theirs. But if you must use powder and shot, come and shoot a rabbit or two, for then you'll get something worth a shilling, and save a shilling's worth of swedes and wizzels into the bargain."

So I went with him, and shot five or six rabbits, which he kicked up for me out of the heath and grass.

"That's nothing!" he said, as I was glad at the sport. "Why, of a summer morning when I gets up, it may be at four, they're as thick as thieves—which they are—all over our oats and roots. Them as breeds them ought to pay the damage, and that's the Crown."

"But a rabbit belongs to no one, Grimditch; it's *feræ naturæ*, as the lawyers say—they have a right to go where they like."

"Ah," said Grimditch, bitterly, "if I had my

way, I'd soon send all the lawyers packing, and the rabbits too. Why, there was a man down our way, in Oxfordshire, as had a bit of land to sell which was copyhold of some manor—the deans and chapters of Westminster, I believe—and before he could sell it, he had to pay better nor fifty pounds in lawyers' fees, when the whole lot wasn't more than fifty acres."

"Well, but about the rabbits," I said.

"Well, what I say about the rabbits is, that if the Crown chooses to keep them, it ought to be bound to feed them and to keep them at home, and not to let them come eating our 'wizzel' like that."

As he said this, he pointed out a patch of man-gold, in which the rabbits had certainly made great havoc. We did not much care about it, as our farming was more for fun than anything else, and it was very amusing to see the rabbits skipping and jumping about; but the Crown must be a sore neighbour to any one who really wished to farm, and you see, even in those days, Grimditch, who was anything but democratic, had taken it into his head that those who reared the rabbits for their own amusement ought not only to feed them, which the Crown did not, but also to take steps to prevent them from straying on to other people's land, and devouring their crops.



CHAPTER XV.

HOW WE WENT UP TO OXFORD.

IN October we went up. It was a damp, misty day when I got there, having driven all the way to Reading from Buttersteep, to catch the Oxford coach. The old lines of travel are so obliterated by railways, that I scarce remember how we got from Reading to Oxford ; but I think the coach went by way of Wallingford and Dorchester, and so by the low road to the University.

I recollect that it was about four o'clock that the coach drew up at the Angel, whence I walked to Christ Church, while a porter took my luggage on a truck. I was there long before Irwin, who could not reach Oxford before eight in the evening, coming across from Birmingham by coach. When I asked the porter at Tom where my rooms were, he said,

"Let me see, you and Mr. Irwin are both in attics in 'Chaplains;' they are the worst rooms in the House."

Now you must know that Chaplains was a little quadrangle near the back of the hall, where I suppose the chaplains of the cathedral were originally housed, but which had since been turned into college rooms, the chaplains receiving the room rent. This little fact made rooms in Chaplains not only the worst in point of position, but the dearest abode in all the House, because they supported the chaplains, and I should think, by what we paid, pretty handsomely.

But until you saw them, no one could have imagined how very bad they were as rooms, quite apart from price. A miserable, break-neck staircase led up to them, and when you opened the door, you were at a loss to believe whether it were a room or a cupboard into which you were entering. Irwin said, when he saw his, which were close to mine—and that was a great comfort—that now he knew what perfect happiness was, for he could poke his fire, shut his door, and open his window without rising from his chair. But the bedroom! Well, I have slept in all sorts of out-of-the-way places—in lofts, and barns, and tents, and even in churches in Iceland—but I

never slept in anything calling itself a bedroom like mine in Chaplains. There was a tradition that it once had a window, but that had been long since built over and blocked up, and the only way of getting light or air into it, was from the sitting-room. All the time I was in "Chaplains," therefore, I lived on borrowed air and light—or rather, my bedroom borrowed it from my sitting-room, and as it could never repay the loan, must have been hopelessly in debt. When I add to this, that the chimney decidedly smoked, and that very capriciously—sometimes when there was no wind, and always when there was any wind—and that the roof very often let in the rain, you will see that attics in Chaplains in 183—, were not the most cheerful residence in the world.

My scout—yes, he is standing at my elbow all the while I am surveying my rooms—my scout Fareburn sees what is passing through my mind. Poor fellow! he has had to say the same thing so many times.

"They're better to live in than to look at. Once in, you'll feel happier. Besides, no one stays here long. In a term or two, you'll be put into better rooms. You were the last to enter on the Dean's list, and these are the very last rooms in the House."

This speech reminded me that I had no right to grumble; I ought to be thankful for having any rooms at all, and so made up my mind to say nothing against them.

"So these are mine, and where are Mr. Irwin's?"

"Opposite," said Fareburn; "hisn is No. 6, yourn is No. 7."

Then he went on, pointing to some very suspicious marks on the "oak," or outer door of my room—

"The last gent as was here was of a very lively turn, too lively for the Dean by half, and so after he had been up one term he was sent down to visit his maternal parient, and that's how you've got his rooms. Well; one day, Mr. Barnes, the Sub-dean, was a-walking in the quad below when he smells a smell of gunpowder, and hears a noise of what he called 'firearms.'

"'Fareburn,' says he, 'what's all this smell of gunpowder and this noise as I hear?'

"'I smelln no smell, Mr. Sub-dean,' says I, 'and I hearn no sound of firearms.'

"'Then you're deaf or a fool,' says he; as if it were my place to hear or smell anything but what belongs to my place. But just then came such a 'bang, bang,' that Mr. Barnes turn to me, and says, 'There, do you hear that?'

“‘Yes, Mr. Sub-dean,’ I says; ‘I hear something like letting out water.’

“‘Water,’ said the Sub-dean, ‘water!’ and I do believe he were just going to say something shocking, but he swallowed it down, and says nothing, but runs up this staircase, and just when he comes up opposite to your door, he hears another ‘bang, bang,’ and out flies the splinters out of the oak like mad, and it was Mr. — inside amusing himself in practising with a double-barrel pistol at a bit of paper against his inner door, and the balls had passed right through it and this oak, tearing out these strips as they came out, and it was within an ace that the Sub-dean hadn’t got one of them through his head.”

“And what did he do?”

“Do!” said Fareburn; “do! Ah! I see you don’t know the Sub-dean. Many another man would have gone away and written a letter to Mr. —, but our Sub-dean went up to the door as bold as a lion, and roared out, ‘Open the door this minute, Mr. —. It’s me, the Sub-dean.’

“And in a minute Mr. —, whom none of his friends could draw, was drawn like a badger by the Sub-dean, and called up before the Dean, and rusticated, and I don’t suppose he’ll ever come back, for the very last words he said

was, 'Good-bye, Fareburn ; 'I'm going into the army.'"

After this very instructive conversation, Mr. Fareburn left me to meditate on the folly of Mr. —, and to resolve not to be rusticated for practising with pistols in Chaplains.

What did I do till Irwin came ? I unpacked my books, which had come by waggon before me, but though they were not very many, and not nearly all my collection, they were more than enough to fill the very few shelves which Mr. — had left behind him. Next I unpacked my clothes and arranged them tidily in a chest of drawers in the bed-cupboard. My mother had always striven to make me tidy, and had been so far successful that wherever I went I always started tidy, and then rapidly degenerated into litter and untidiness, and I am not sure that one line in the great lesson of life is not this—' Man makes a litter and woman comes after him, and sets it straight.' I have known few tidy men, and they were all third-rate people, but most women are tidy, and so some of them must be first-rate.

Then, after I had made my rooms look as comfortable as I could, I put on my cap and gown, that odious cumbrous gown which is so hideous

that the mere sight of it ought to make every one not only try for but get a scholarship, that he may wear a full-sleeved gown ; and so, in my academicals, I went out and loitered up and down the High Street.

How beautiful it then was with its quaint old houses and high gables, most of which have now given way to flaunting red-brick fronts. Sometimes those old Oxford houses stood in pairs side by side, one propping up the other, as though if one were removed the other would inevitably fall, like a faithful aged couple, of whom if death takes one the other soon follows.

The sun was setting, and as the High Street runs east and west, so the mornings in the spring are most picturesque and the evenings in the autumn. In no town that I know and in no street in any town are the October sunsets so beautiful. So I went on, longing for Irwin to come, and strolling about looking in at the shops—as Jubbers and Sadlers, both confectioners, and now both gone, so that the joke in the “Pluck Papers” as to “Jubberi Templum,” has now come true:—“*Quis autem Jubberus, et de ejus templo quis pro certo aliquid affirmaverit?*”—“Who was Jubber? and as for his temple, who for a certainty can affirm aught?”

Then there was Spires, a hairdresser, at whose shop, as now, much was sold besides perfumery; and Vincent's and Parker's in the Broad Street, booksellers, the latter the most tempting shop with its well-bound volumes; and Ryman's and Wyatt's, print-shops, in both of which such good, and some such bad, prints, according to the taste of the buyers, were to be got. I pass over the inns, the Stars, Roebucks, Mitres, and Maiden-heads, and King's Arms, except to say that as there was no hall that day I had to dine at one of them, which I thought rather hard.

"Never no hall," said Fareburn, "on the first day of term; most of the gents don't come up till it's too late to dine."

After dinner, in which I several times nearly choked myself, I again walked about. If you wonder why I did not go to see more of the colleges before dinner, I will tell you that I waited for Irwin, with whom all the pleasure of my existence was now more than ever bound up. It was a double pleasure to see any pleasure-bringing sight or scene with him, and so I fancy it is always with perfect love.

"A sight for one is twice a sight for two."

I do not think I ever felt so lonely as at that

first start at Oxford. It was the end of an old period and the beginning of a new one, and here I was taking the first step in it alone and without Irwin.

I am ashamed to say how many times I looked at my watch before eight, the hour at which he was to come, came, and when it came the coach was late.

"Sure to be late," said the hostler at the Mitre, "the roads is so heavy with slush."

But at half-past eight up drove the Pig, for he had come by the Pig after all, and down jumped Irwin, and in a minute I was shaking him by the hand and helping him to get his luggage together.

"What fun!" he said, "to be here at last. How cold my feet are with dangling over the side; almost as cold as that bitter morning on Stokenchurch Hill. Let us run," and then he ran down the High Street like a roe, leaving me to give orders to the porter whither the luggage was to be carried.

"No. 7, Chaplains, Christ Church," I cried, and then away I ran after my friend.

He had loitered, wild creature that he was, when he saw that he was not pursued, and I

found him looking in at a print-shop quite forgetful of his cold feet.

"There's no hurry," he said; "I must just look at those Munich lithographs. See! they are the same apostles that Mr. Chrysostom had in his house at Bayswater. I shall make a note of this shop, and come and buy them to-morrow; they will just do to hang up in my bedroom."

"Wait till you see your bedroom," I said, and then I coaxed him to come on and leave the shop.

"Yes," he said, "there is a time for all things, and it certainly is not the time to buy lithographs, however good, the very moment one has jumped off a coach on the first day of residence at Oxford. Tell me, old fellow, how do you feel?"

"So lonely till you came. I could have sat down and cried; but all is changed since you came. How happy we shall be together."

"Of course we shall," cried Irwin. "Do you know I have often thought of what that dear Mr. Chrysostom said, and of his story and the riddle of life, and yet, though it might have made me melancholy to reflect how many chances we have against us, and how very wretched we may be, yet what he said of the transitory na-

ture of life, and of its only being one part of a much longer existence, has made me, on the whole, much happier. What we have both got to do is to trust in God, and then bear whatever befalls us with a stout heart."

I suppose he expected me to say something, but I only mused on what he said, and so he went on—

"Well, it is rather hard to moralize on one's way from the coach to one's new rooms. And yet after all, this passing and transit from the old Irwin, the Westminster boy, to the new Irwin, the Oxford man, is very like that passage from an inferior life here to that happy state to which we believe the good shall be translated in a moment, ay, in the twinkling of an eye."

It was so absurd to me to compare the miserable rooms to which I was hurrying him, with the mansions of the blest, that I burst out laughing, much to Irwin's disgust.

"That you call friendship, because when I make a profound speculation, and treat you to it in the street, like one of the old peripatetics, you unearnest fellow, you burst out laughing, as if the Kingdom of Heaven and the consideration of it were any laughing matter."

"All I say in self-defence is what one of the

old sages would have said, and if there is any truth in history, did say: 'Respice finem'—'Consider the end.' Wait and see what your rooms are like before you compare them to the Kingdom of Heaven."

By this time we were in Tom Quad, and cutting diagonally across it to pass out at the entrance by the hall staircase, and so on, keeping to the right to the little quadrangle in which "Chaplains" stood.

"The way to the gate of life is dark and slippery," murmured Irwin, "and so it is here, that's one likeness," as we crossed the narrow space.

Then we mounted the ill-lit staircase, and reaching the top first I threw open the door of No. 7, and cried out, "I am thy good angel, thy St. Peter, enter the abode reserved for thee in the Attics of Chaplains."

It so happened that they looked much more cheerful than mine had appeared when I arrived, because Fareburn had lighted a fire, and laid tea, and got out Irwin's commons—that is his bread-and-butter—from the buttery, by which, be it known to the ignorant, term is kept at Oxford. At least, it was so kept at that time, which is all that I am concerned about here.

"Well," said Irwin, "what is there to find fault with in them? They are certainly narrow, and cold, and damp, but that only makes them more like the passage from death unto life, for what is that but the grave? and besides, even in the grave the good carry their heaven about with them, and so it will be here in these wretched rooms, which after all are but our abiding place for a season. And now I am tired of moralizing, and metaphors, and similes; sit down and have some tea, for I have had nothing to eat since two o'clock, and have, to use one of my native expressions, an 'illigant appetite.'"

No, there never was such a man as Irwin for putting a good face on things, and I am sure it was his sanguine, cheerful, and yet thoughtful turn of mind that, along with Mr. Chrysostom's advice, made me what I am, if I am worth anything at all.

After Irwin had satisfied what he called his mighty hunger—such as Nimrod or Esau might have felt—though it was only on bread-and-butter and tea, he made me tell him all that had happened at Buttersteep, which was not much—for we were in that happy state in which our family annals were dull—since Irwin's departure. The old maids and the aborigines liked us more, and

we liked them less. I fancy their opinion of us, which had sunk when they heard we had sent away our landau—"a thing only hired to come down in and make a dash," as one of the oldest and ugliest of the colony said—revived a good deal when they found its place supplied by a brougham and phaeton.

It is very curious what a thorough test of snobbishness that carriage test is, particularly in the country, where many people who never stir out of their own grounds keep carriages, for fear of the social diminution which they would suffer if they were known to be without one.

But to come back to Irwin. He had spent his time pleasantly enough with his guardians alternately. "But," he added, with a sigh, which seemed to come from the bottom of his heart, "it is very hard to be always such an apple of discord between those worthy people. I suppose, though, they would agree to meet if I were seriously ill—which I never mean to be—or if anything happened to me."

And so that first day at Oxford, which had begun so miserably for me without Irwin, ended in rather a lively conversation, as befits bosom

friends; and when we had talked ourselves out, we crept each into our respective bed-cupboards, and slept till we were called by Fareburn, who said,

“Half-past seven, and only just time to go to the cathedral to chapel.”





CHAPTER XVI.

HOW WE SPENT OUR FIRST TERM.

I AM not going to tell you how we spent each day—or, rather, I shall tell you how we spent each day in a general way, and leave you to guess how we spent them all. At half-past seven we went to chapel—a very good institution, if for no other reason than that it got men up early. Mind! don't snap me up as if I had said it was the right reason; for, of course, there is a far higher reason than that young men, and all men, should begin the day seriously and cheerfully. Every one in the house, commoner or student alike, went in surplices, so that the effect in the old cathedral was, to me at least, very imposing.

I do not at all agree with that radical who said that chapel ought to be swept away as a

foolish institution ; but then it must be remembered that this reformer was for doing away with all religion and religious teaching, because it had a tendency to bias the human mind, and to prejudice it on a point which ought to be left to its own free will.

I often laugh at such radicals when I think of the man—by the way, it was one of Mr. Chrysostom's stories—who resolved never to let his child hear the name of God, because he wished it, when it reached the years of discretion, to form its own judgment. Every nurse, therefore, and maid, that came into that establishment, was sworn—as much as you can swear maids—to obey her master in this, that she was never to teach the child a prayer, nor to let it hear the name of God as God.

Well, so it went on for some time, till the child was five or six years old ; and the father—the philosophic father—chuckled when he thought to himself, “The child shall judge for himself; how nicely he is growing up without religion.”

But at last one day, all his hopes were dashed to the ground, by overhearing one of the nursery maids say to the child, “If you're not good, you shan't say your Lord's Prayer;” and then it came out that the child, under strict injunctions not to

tell it to the father, had for some time been regularly taught the Lord's Prayer.

Of course, he tore his hair—if he had any—but he was defeated, and the child had lost its chance of judging in matters of religion for itself.

After chapel we had breakfast, commons again, and tea and coffee, and anything else we chose to order. Those were the days for Oxford sausages, which the scouts now say have never been what they were since the University Commission. The Tory scouts like Fareburn, putting cause and effect together after their system of logic, declare the pigs have never been the pigs they were since that inquiry; and, of course, as one of them lately said, "If the pigs is not the same, how can you expect the saussingers to be as good as they was in the old time?"

After breakfast, in about an hour, came lectures—two, and very rarely three in a day—between ten and one. On saints' days and holidays there were no lectures, but, I think, service in the cathedral at ten. That I used to think rather a bore, as it cut up the morning; and though I have always maintained against Aristotle's doctrine of habits, that there is no habit of getting up early in the morning, still I would far rather get up, albeit reluctantly, at half-past

seven, and have, after breakfast, the whole day before me, than snore till nine, and then have the forenoon cut up by going to chapel at ten.

After the lecture was over, fellows who prided themselves on being stout, and strong, and hearty, rushed off to ride, or to row, or to walk, without a morsel of food.

This at once raises the great question of luncheon, which an eminent divine of the Established Church once said had caused him more perplexity than all the Thirty-nine Articles put together. Breakfast he understood, and dinner he understood, but what was luncheon? How, if you ate a sufficiently good breakfast, could you eat luncheon without running the risk of spoiling your dinner? And if you spoiled your dinner, the final act of the day, where were you? On the whole, then, though he confessed that he sometimes succumbed to the weakness of the flesh, he was against luncheon, and would vote against it in Convocation, if put to the vote; but then dinner must be early, or he would not answer for the consequences.

All which doubts, I am happy to say, have since been solved against that divine and in favour of luncheon, by the simple fact that dinners, even at the University, are not so early as they used to

be, so if that eminent man were alive, and we should find him voting in Convocation, it would be for and not against luncheon.

What fun it would be to hear the Vice-Chancellor putting it to the vote, *Placetne lunchio?* and to hear the numbers of "Placets" and the feeble "Non-placets," which, if they demanded a poll, might be properly told as in the Stanley vote, *abire in sinistram partem*, or to get about their business to the dogs as fast as they could.

But even in those days Irwin and I were before our time. Indeed, a young man, in the true sense of the word, has been defined as "animal semper ad edendum paratum," an animal ever ready to eat, and without affirming that we two were such gluttons, I think I may say that we were always ready for bread and cheese at half-past one, even though we did dine at five.

After that, as Irwin said, we were ready for anything, and often and often we went out for long rows, and walks, and rides, quite forgetting that five o'clock dinner, and so proving ourselves not to be so greedy after all as some of you think we must have been.

In that first term we took more to the water, and one of the very first things we did was to go down together and subscribe to the "water," as it

was called, by which, for a very small annual payment, we could have a skiff each whenever we chose.

Oh! what a happy time it was, to row down to Iffley, or Sandford of ill-omened name, or Newnham, or up to Godstow, famous for Fair Rosamond and spitch-cocked eels. All those on the Isis; or to thread Cherwell to Islip, returning at night, though that was a summer day's row, and I hardly think we ever attempted it in winter.

If I should compare the "water" at Oxford then with what I have heard and read of it now, I should say those were far better days for the undergraduate. There were fewer athletic sports, but much more real sport in the undisciplined strength which rushed, as each man chose, to this or that pursuit, and did it while it lasted with all his might and main. Nowadays all seems reduced to rule and subscription, and we hear more of college sports and less of individual pleasure. I fancy we enjoyed it more in those far more natural days. We rowed and ran and jumped because we liked it, not because all the college looked on and clapped their hands at their Torpid, or their eight, or their four, and made the sky ring with the shouts which hailed one of their men winner in the "University Mile."

Well, but some anxious parent will say, "That was not what you were sent up to the University for: you went up to work. Did you not work?"

Yes, we did work; and I fancy sometimes a deal harder than men do now, though that, too, like sucking eggs, may be all changed since my time. Those were not so much the days of coaching and cramming as of reading.

"Read your books," Mr. Chrysostom had said, and when we went up to the House we found the Dean re-echoing the injunction with a deep bass growl of warning like a grizzly bear.

"Read your books, and let me see that you have read them at Collections."

"Collections! what are they?"

Collections are things which no undergraduate in Oxford can do without, but which he would very willingly avoid. That is very oracular, you say; tell us what Collections are.

Well! Collections are the great gathering at the end of every term, when undergraduates appear before the Dons to be judged by their works. They are a sort of doomsday or day of judgment, when, besides their shortcomings in lecture and study, all that they have omitted or committed in the term turns up against them. This, so far as reading was concerned, was what

the Dean meant by letting him see that we had read our books at Collections. But, besides this, if any man were given to lie too long in bed in the morning, if he missed the regular eight chapels a week, two on Sundays and one on each weekday; if he were given to knock in late, that is, if his gate bill were high—for you must know that after nine all college-gates are shut, and undergraduates who come in, or “knock in,” after that hour had to pay a small fine; if he hunted too often, or if his extra “battels,” that is, his extra buttery or kitchen bill were too high, though one or all of those things might then be passed over for the moment, they were stored up for Collections, when he was sure to hear of them from the Dean.

If, too, he were unruly in the House, given to wade in Mercury or to paint doors red, if he made the quads resound with songs at supper parties in his rooms, again he was sure to hear of it at Collections, and the result was, that if no one could say that he had been perfect in his conduct in all these respects, Collections remained a bugbear to every one, and took the shape of a terminal visit to the dentist hanging over every one's head.

For the rest, they were a sort of examination: Latin prose was done, questions set and answered,

and it all ended with an interview with the Dean, who might make himself agreeable or not as the case might be.

Nor was it always the undergraduate who came off second on those occasions. Sometimes the tutor felt the rough side of the Dean's tongue. I very well remember one of them, a very worthy man, complaining of the way in which Irwin, at our first Collections, pronounced the proper name Pharnaces. I believe in English it is commonly pronounced Pharnāces, with the second *a* long, and this the tutor thought, and so when Irwin said "Pharnāces," with that *a* short, the tutor said—

"No, Pharnāces."

I think I see Irwin now, as he drew himself up and said—

"Yes, Pharnāces."

"I think you are wrong," again said the tutor.

"I am sure I am not," said Irwin, "and I will give you proofs."

And then he quoted "*Pharnācis arma*," as the end of an hexameter line in Lucan, and, as if that were not enough, a Greek iambic line, in which the name occurred in the last place as an iambic, that is, a long syllable preceded by a short one. Whence he got his quotation from

Lucan I never knew, but the Greek quotation came from the *Birds* of Aristophanes, which we had read during our last half at Westminster.

Now, though Irwin did this very quietly and modestly, it raised a little stir, and attracted the Dean's attention.

"What's that! what's that!" he exclaimed in his quick way.

"Only a slight mistake which I have made, and which was corrected by Mr. Irwin," said the tutor.

But the Dean insisted on knowing what the slight mistake had been, and when he heard, said—

"Do you call that a slight mistake, sir?—I call it a very great one."

From that day forward the tutors were rather careful in challenging anything which Irwin said in lecture, lest they, too, might hear of it at Collections.

So I have told you that we read, but you are not to suppose that we read ourselves to death—not to mention the fact that those who do so, as their anxious mothers assume, are almost always dead plucks. We had a man in the House who read, as he asserted, twelve hours a day, and I believe he pored over his books very many hours

every day, yet he was plucked in the end, and his explanation of it was, that he had read so much that when he read over his Latin book he forgot his Greek book, and when he read his Greek he forgot his Latin.

As for our friends, their name was legion. I do not suppose that any two men ever had so many friends, either in or out of college; but we were never in any fast or rowing sets, eschewed supper parties, painted no statues or doors, went to chapel and lecture regularly, hunted—not very often—and, in fact, were regular, well-behaved and happy.

Above all things, we were not in debt. That was one of the things on which his Irish guardians agreed about Irwin. He was never to get into debt, and if they heard of it, he was to leave Oxford. But they also gave him a very good allowance, and so saved him from the fate of many a fine fellow whose friends fancy he can live on nothing, or next to nothing, like a chameleon—the result being that such a man must get into debt, and once in it, it is not so easy to stop.

As for me, my mother was very liberal to me—and were not our mining dividends paid to the day by old Ball! so that in a little while we

began to be ashamed of having sided against him with Mr. Chrysostom. Every term I carried all my bills home, and when I returned at the beginning of the next, my mother gave me a cheque for the amount. Living, certainly, was not very expensive in the University in those days, and one great source of expense now, the perpetual subscriptions for some athletic or collegiate object, was unknown. In the summer term we subscribed to the Boat, and there the demand on our purses ended.

I am now telling you of what happened in our first term, which was a pattern and model of all that came after it. Of course we went out to breakfasts and wine parties in moderation; and if I was to have my time over again at Oxford, I should say shun breakfasts and go to wine, for the first is the idlest thing, and the last may be the necessary relief to a very laborious day. But once go to a breakfast party, and your day is gone. Two hours in the morning are wasted, and it only remains to spend the afternoon in the same fashion.

Had we no expensive amusements? Yes, one very expensive one, especially to a beginner, tennis. I admire the game, if for no other reason than that it is a glorious example of payment by

results. When you first begin, the game is so short that you lose it in four or five strokes, which take about five minutes; and, as games are played in sets of six games, and each set cost seven shillings, our early tennis certainly cost fourteen shillings an hour, which, as Oxford amusements went, was rather dear. As you advance, the games get longer, for it takes more strokes to lose them, and a game might last half an hour, if the players were equally matched. But in this our first term of tennis, we were both very bad players, and "Duck-legged Jem," the marker of the Old Court, sucked no small advantage out of us.

He was a character in his way. Nothing irritated him so much as when beginners whom he had taught went away to the new and much better court in Merton Lane. His was the old court, in Oriel Lane. I remember well when we began to desert his arena for the new court, he met us once coming out of the rival establishment, and I still recall the look, more in sorrow than in anger, with which he said to Irwin—

"Oh, Mr. Irwin, to think that I should see you coming out of this court! You, who have been used to play in my court, which have been

trod by the feet of his sacred Majesty King Charles the First!"

I believe what he said was quite true, that Charles the First had played in his court, but I am quite sure had his sacred Majesty been alive in our days that he would have deserted Duck-legged Jem as we did, and played tennis in the new court, which was both bigger and airier, and had besides a much better floor.

So, what with chapels, lectures, boating, tennis, riding, and the society of our friends, our first term glided rapidly away. We were as happy as the day was long, and I believe into no two young hearts did what may be called the *genius loci* so completely enter and take up his abode.

Oxford is ever beautiful, whether as beheld in its cathedral, its colleges, its gardens, its walks and meadows, and though last not least, its High Street. How often in the early mornings used not Irwin and I to run round the meadow as a breather before breakfast, and I am sure we enjoyed it quite as much, and it did us much more good, than if we had done the same distance of measured miles on a modern running path.

In wet weather one of our delights were the Bodleian Library and the University Galleries,

where we might have been beheld inspecting Guy Fawkes's lanthorn, the chair made out of Sir Francis Drake's ship that sailed round the world, the imaginary portraits of the founders of Colleges, down to Nicholas and Dorothy Wadham, the statue of the Earl of Pembroke in bronze, the portrait of Flora McDonald, Lord Burleigh riding to Parliament House on his mule, and though last not least, Duns Scotus writing out the whole Bible fasting, all which of course we firmly believed, the true and the false together, on the authority of the veracious custodian of the galleries in question.

But now Collections are over, and, as Irwin said, the best of friends must part.

"You have been dearer and better to me than any brother," I said to him that last sad morning.

"I am your brother in heart and soul," he said in return, and then he went off to Ireland by way of Birmingham on the Pig, while I got somehow to Reading, where the phaeton picked me up, and brought me safe, about the middle of December, to Buttersteep.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHRISTMAS AT BUTTERSTEEP.

I FOUND my mother very well; not that there had been any doubt of the fact, for she was, without any exception, the very best correspondent I ever had, and her letters, as befitted communications that cost so much, were real letters, none of your scrambling notes which people now sit down and dash off, and then think they have written a letter. There can be no doubt, I think, that the art of letter-writing went out when the penny postage came in, just as the art of folding them went out with envelopes. I think if I were now an examiner setting any one the two most difficult things to do, I would say, "First write me a letter, and then fold it."

But there are so many little things, especially

in matters of true and motherly love, that no letter can tell. There is as much difference between seeing people and writing to them, as there is between driving and walking. How many there are that say, "Oh, it won't matter; when they are gone I can write to them," just as they might say if they lost a leg, "What will it signify? I can drive about." But in the one case let "them" go out of town, and they will soon find how tantalizing letters are compared with bodily presence; and if in the other "they" lost a leg, they would quickly discover that there are things to be done and sights to be seen, that can only be seen and done walking and on foot, and that all the carriages in the world will not enable one to do them or to see them properly, any more than all the king's horses and all the king's men could put Humpty Dumpty together again.

And so it was that after she had written regularly two or three times a week, and as she fancied had said all in her letters that possibly could be said, my mother, as soon as I came home, found such a gleaning of little things all over the field of her correspondence, that those fallen ears would have sufficed to fill her letters over and over again.

That was a wet Christmas—no frost, but fine, open weather. Whether it was one of those green Yules that make a fat churchyard, I do not remember; but it was very pleasant while it lasted for consumptive folks, and Mr. Chrysostom wrote from Ventnor, where the doctors had sent him to winter, that it suited him perfectly.

For myself, there we were close to the kennels of the king's hounds. The deer paddock at Swinley was within a quarter of a mile of Buttersteep. The hounds, too, in those days, were not followed by the horse-dealers and horse-breakers, who now hunt with her Majesty's, and are such a terror to the few decent people who follow them. Davis was then in the prime of his career—the most accomplished horseman in the saddle, and the most perfect-looking gentleman out of it. It is not always given to men to look equally well in different positions. I have seen many a judge without his wig, who looked more like a scarecrow than a Solon, and yet he was a terror to offenders when he went circuit, or sat at Westminster. And I think the case is much the same with generals, admirals, footmen, and policemen. In them "the apparel" not only "oft," but "always proclaims the man;" but if you met—as you sometimes might in the sum-

mer—Davis walking in the park, you would have put him down at once as a general or a statesman, and this would be confirmed if you saw the Master of the Buckhounds talking to him, for then the ignorant would go away and say, "They must be both about the Court," and Davis would be put down as a lord in waiting at the very least.

Well, as the occasion was so tempting, I persuaded my mother to let me get a hack up from Oxford, and on that animal—I must say, it was a very good one—I rode with the royal hounds that vacation. If any of you old fogies who must have your two weight-bearing horses out every day, and yet are never near the finish, should laugh at this, let me tell you that in those days an Oxford hack might be a very good and clever animal; and also let me tell you another important secret in my success. I only weighed nine stone seven. Set that against your twelve or fourteen stone, and you will perceive, if you have any perception, that it was quite possible to ride well to hounds at such a feather weight.

This again is a proof that more than half the good and great things in the world have been done on very slender means and appliances. Battles have *not* always been won by the biggest

battalions, the greatest poets have lived starving in garrets, the greatest revolutions in religion or politics have been made by a little knot of men. The great truth still remains that it is reason, and faith, and energy, rather than numbers and brute force, that win the day.

So it was, to compare small things with great, with my hunting. Whenever I mounted Astomos, "the hard-mouthed one"—for that was the name that Irwin had given him the first time he rode him—I was not perplexed with doubt as to whether I should be too heavy for him, or whether he would take his fences cleverly, or come down cleverly with a drop into a lane. Still less did I concern myself with wondering where I might be at the end of the day, how far it would be from home, how my limbs would bear it, and whether I had my flask and, my luncheon all right.

All these questions, and fifty others, which rise like ghosts on the imagination of your old fogey—who *never* gets farther with his two weight-bearers than up to the top of a hill, whence, like Eliza on "Minden's height," he surveys the run—I threw at once to the winds, together with all considerations as to wet feet and a soaked skin, and the result was—glorious privilege of youth

—that I hunted whenever the meet was near, and never was either sick or sorry however drenched I might be.

What did I do besides? I went to ever so many parties and “hops,” given by the Sunninghill colony and the aborigines. They were all now getting very fond of us, and we gave one or two entertainments in return; and though there were no young ladies in the neighbourhood—for you know old maids are not allowed to have daughters now, and still less then—and I was really the only young man, if it was not very lively, it was sufficiently amusing.

Well, but the aborigines must have had children, if the old maids had not? Yes, they had—I know it; but all their children were young, for, as you know, the aborigines of any country always do things at set times and seasons. They all die at the same time and age, just like a cabbage or a cauliflower; and they all marry at the same age, like ducks and geese; and they have all children at the same age, like turkeys and pigs; so that you are with them always, either in a young or a grown-up cycle, so far as their children are concerned; and that Christmas at Buttersteep we were in a young cycle—just as wet and dry seasons come in cycles—and so there

were no grown-up young ladies or young men ; and so it was, as I have said, there were no young ladies, and I was the only young man.

“What a good thing,” many a mother will say, whose only boy has just been snapped up by what she calls “a designing young thing.” “Happy the household near which there are no young ladies to destroy the peace of families ; and happy the sons who obey their mothers, and don’t fall in love with undesirable objects.”

Now, I am not going to argue the point with this anxious mother, whether, after all, one may not have too much “of a good thing ;” for, really, at that time of my life, it gave me no sort of concern whether there were young ladies or not in the neighbourhood. I stood in no need of woman’s friendship or love, so long as my heart was so utterly wedded to Irwin. And this, I think, is very natural, for the young heart has only room in it for one object of affection at a time ; and if a young lady looks in at its windows, and sees the little tenement quite full, what can she do but turn aside and seek for some other empty habitation ? It is only when one is older, and we find our hearts will stretch, like all muscles, that we find we have room in it for several kinds of affections, and can love men as well as women,

and children as well as grown-up people; but the young male heart is unlike heaven in this—that it has only one mansion, and when that is filled, as mine was with Irwin, there was really no room for any one else. Why try to get in when the vehicle was full?

I dare say some of you will say, "This is all nonsense, the idle talk of a man who knew not what the love of woman is." Well! that is just the point to which I wished to bring you. I do not deny that the love of woman is the most sustaining thing in life, but for the present the love of man in my intense friendship for Irwin was all in all to me, and I needed nothing else. Nor even now am I quite sure that the pure and holy feeling which filled my heart for Irwin has ever been surpassed by any other affection which may have possessed me.

But to come back to the old story. There were nothing but old maids and fathers of families and mothers of families and their babies about us, forming a society quite as monotonous as a forest of fir-trees, in which the only difference is that some of them shoot up double from one root—these are the married couples—some stand single in the wood—these are the old maids—and some are mere saplings in all stages of growth, and they are the babes and infants.

If you ask whether there were any old bachelors I answer none, or next to none, and for a very good reason—very few old bachelors are fools enough to live in the country. An old bachelor is as much a town bird as the London sparrow. He lives in a room in various parts of the town, according to his means, and he has his club or his coffee-house, and he finds his shilling go further in London than in any other place. He is altogether freer and happier and more respected there, and this is why, besides London, he frequents great towns. But old maids settle down much more often in the country. I do not mean to say, as the old maid among birds very often takes the plumage of the male, that there are not some strong-minded, mulish, mannish old spinsters who cling to towns, and would pass for men anywhere were it not for their petticoats. But they are happily the exceptions. For the most part they settle down in knots of twos or threes in snug cottages in the country, not too far from the metropolis, and there they tend the poor and form reading clubs and talk scandal—poor things! why should they not? as if no one else but old maids talked scandal—and, on the whole, eke out a far happier existence than they ever could in lodgings and boarding-houses in town. In

London they are thrown away and out of place, or their place is better filled by men, but they are in their place in the country, and where old bachelors are usually worth nothing and a nuisance.

But besides our old maids and aborigines we had a clergyman and a doctor. These, you know, are as necessary and inevitable in every neighbourhood as death and the tax-gatherer.

First let me describe the doctor. He was without exception the most active and ubiquitous man I ever knew. If I went out with the hounds he was there. If I drove away to Bag-shot he was there. If one called on the aborigines he was there, vaccinating the children or pulling out their first teeth with his fingers, or about Christmas time prescribing "*Hydrarg. subm.*"—I quote from the old *pharmacopœia*—"pill. ii. vespere sumend. *Haustus sennæ primâ mane sumend ;*" or "*Oleum ricini cochleare magnum,*" all which, or some of them, those olive-branches had to swallow, as a sequel to their Christmas festivities. I verily believe that I never went anywhere without seeing him, and he was the only man I ever knew who seemed to possess the secret of completely coupling business and pleasure. I need not say that he was welcome every-

where, except to the children, and I have no sort of doubt that he did more to keep up the health of the district by his genial presence and good stories than by all his drugs and doses.

Not that he was at all a Sangrado. He was far too cheery for that.

"I have often laughed death out of a house," I have heard him say, "when all other means failed. Half the people that die mope themselves to death, and then they have to take physic, and then they are too weak to stand it, and they die."

To the poor he was invariably kind and considerate. I have met him late at night riding over the heath to some poor cottage, the inmates of which I know could never have paid him. "What was he to do?" he said, as if in apology for his goodness, "the poor woman can't be allowed to die, and they are far too proud to go into the workhouse," which, I may add, was just then an utter abomination to the deserving poor.

They used to say that he went round gossiping with the old maids at Sunninghill, and so I have no doubt he did, but after he had gossiped with them and heard their last bit of scandal, he used to say, when he put on his hat,

"By the way, Susan Biggs is very poorly, and

as its her first child, perhaps you might send her a little linen and some soup."

And then the dear old scandalous cat would trudge off herself with another old cat, equally scandalous and equally dear, and Susan Biggs would that very afternoon have relief, and kind words so much more precious than any relief, all because Mr. Squills *would* go gossiping about the country. No! there are worse people in the country than village doctors and old maids.

But our clergyman was a very different person, though equally good in his way. He was young and tall and handsome, whereas the doctor was old and short and plain. But while Squills was the most cheerful of men, Mr. Limpus was the greatest kill-joy it was possible to conceive. No one ever knew what was the matter with him, and Squills said, though he was always attending him, he never could find out exactly what his ailment was.

"As soon as I treat him for one disease he breaks out with another; and it was only a week ago he grimly told me he was afraid he had got a disease he had been reading about, and which turned out to be a woman's disease, which no man could have."

In fact Mr. Limpus was a confirmed hypochon-

driac, and when you have said that you may as well add there is no disease under the sun that he might not suppose he had caught.

"And yet," said Squills, "he eats and sleeps well, far better than I do, and with all that, he is always complaining."

Another part of his character—and perhaps it went along with his hypochondria—was that he was always fancying the Dissenters were preaching at him; and so they did, perhaps, sometimes, and especially when his intolerance deserved it, but for the most part it was all fancy, and they were just as much preaching at him as against the Archbishop of Canterbury.

He was unmarried, and so I suppose I ought to have reckoned him as another young man; and I would have done so had he not been so morbid and old in mind; but had I put him down in my list, I must have added Squills to it, for he was really much younger at heart.

Mr. Limpus was rather a High Churchman, as High Churchmen went in those days, though I am afraid his ecclesiastical stature would not have satisfied the height of this generation. His services? His services were faithfully and well performed, and his sermons very short. They were not like Butler's, short but deep, for they

were short and shallow. Had he lived now, he would have been addicted to croquet, and married an "artful young creature;" but those were not the days of croquet, and as yet no artful young creature had an opportunity of bewitching him.

For the rest, he was at first rather a favourite with my mother, who used to listen to his lugubrious stories and believe them; but he was too mournful and morbid for me, in the ardour of my youth, and whenever I saw him I said to myself, "Thank heaven I am not as he is!" and, to my shame, I must confess that, like the Pharisee in the Bible, I as often as not turned aside when I saw him approaching Buttersteep.





CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW WE TOOK TO READING AND OTHER THINGS.

WHEN the vacation was over I went back to Oxford. There I was soon in Irwin's room, and heard with delight from Fareburn that the Dean had ordered us both to have new rooms in Peckwater.

"You'll be both on the same staircase, No. 4, Peck," said Fareburn. "You'll find it noisier than it is here, and, besides, you'll lose me."

And so it was. We had made so good a figure in Collections that the Dean, whose laws were as the Medes and Persians, ordered us to have the best rooms that became vacant, and these happened to be those of two idle fellows whose painting doors and "other larks," as Fareburn called them, had proved too much for the Dean and Canons.

"Why," said Fareburn, "what do you think one of them done when he was on a ground floor in Peck, at the corner, in his first term. Why he gets one of them glasses as turns people upside down, and sticks it up in his window, and when the Sub-dean's daughters passed by, there they stood on their heads in the glass. The Sub-dean was very angry, as well he might, that any undergraduate should turn his daughters upside down. It was so very rude, he said. But the worst was when he kicked over the Dean's dinner in hall last Gaudy, though it warn't found out till after he was sent down."

"And pray, what was that?" said Irwin.

"Why, you see, on Gaudy Day—that is what they call Founders' Day elsewheres—the Dean and Canons always has a spread to themselves after you young gents have had your regular dinner in hall. And so last Gaudy, Mr. Dareall was just coming out of hall when he met Thomas coming in with a tray covered with the Dean's dinner, soup and fish, and I know not what beside. He was holding it with both hands, and staring straight before him, trotting up to the high tables where the Dons was just a-gathering. Then Mr. Dareall—he was spry and active, to be sure—he just ups with one leg as he passed Thomas, and

gave the tray one little kick, a'most like a lamb's frisk, just underneath, and down came the tray, and down came Thomas right upon the soup and fish, and at that Gaudy the Dean had no fish—and the best was, it was done so neatly not a soul ever knew that Mr. Dareall done it till he let the cat out of the bag himself.”

To say the truth, both of us had got so accustomed to our quarters that it was rather a bore to move than otherwise. Still we had to go to much better quarters, though they were much noisier, and then, as Fareburn said—

“Them thirds will be awful 'eavy.”

I dare say few of you know what “thirds” are. Perhaps you think they were like those widows’ “thirds,” which are one of the oldest of women’s rights in England, but they were nothing of the kind.

“Thirds” were the valuation which was put on the furniture of the rooms into which a new-comer came, and they were paid to the outgoing occupant. In our old rooms our thirds had been very low, as befitted attics in which the furniture was scanty, and worn and old; but in our new rooms, which Mr. Dareall and another kindred spirit had furnished, we had to pay a very handsome sum for coming into possession of tables

and chairs, and sofas and glasses which we did not in the least want. But Irwin's guardians were equal to the occasion, and my mother, also, was as good as gold in sending me a cheque for the amount.

Now I am not going to tell you everything that befell us at Oxford, but only a few things that illustrate our career there. I must get on if this true story is ever to come to an end. I could easily make it more amusing, but I wish it to be true.

Very soon after we went up that term the Dean sent to say he would be glad to speak to us; and when we got into his library, he made us a speech.

He began by saying how pleased he had been with our work at Collections, and said if it had been in his power he would have offered us each a Studentship—"You first," he said to Irwin, "and then you," turning to me. But, as we well knew, he could not always do what he wished, and it so happened that none of the Canons, who claimed the patronage of the Studentships about to be vacant, would give up their turn.

"But what I wished to say is, that I hoped you would both read for honours, for it grieves me to see that those only read for honours to whom it is an object to get the emoluments which

follow as their reward. Now it will be a bad day for this University"—and as he said "University" you could see that the old man thought there was nothing like Oxford on the face of the earth—"when young men read for the sake of money, and not for the sake of learning and knowledge itself. If it be so, the days of great scholars will be over, and, what is more, the days of this University will be numbered."

I have often thought in these days of competition of what the old Dean said, and certainly, whatever Oxford may now produce, it is not great scholars in Latin and Greek. Will the days ever come when learning even in Oxford will only be a "bread-study," as the Germans call it?

But to return to ourselves. What could we do when thus appealed to, but answer that we would do as the Dean desired?

"I knew you would! I knew you would!" he exclaimed, and warmly shaking us by both hands he bowed us out of his library.

"That, I suppose," said Irwin, "is a very great compliment, but won't it be a bore going to our coach in the afternoon when we might be riding, or on the water."

"It can't be helped," I said, "the thing is done. The next thing we have to do is to look out for the best coach we can find."

So we looked for a coach, and we found him very early, even without the aid of the lanthorn of Diogenes.

You all know what a "coach" is, but if you don't, he was and is a private tutor, with whom you read subjects in which you may or may not be deficient, as the case may be. Every one is said to be able to do without them, and everybody has one, at least ninety-nine reading men out of the hundred had them in my time, and if a coach does nothing else he keeps you up to your work, if you have any sense of self-respect, for one feels like a fool to go day after day to a clever fellow and confess you have done nothing for him.

As for classics, that is to say scholarship in Latin and Greek, the Dean was pleased to say if we lost nothing that we had brought with us from Westminster, we should do very well in the schools. It was science, and logic, and philosophy, that is our Aristotle and moral science, that he feared we might be weak in, as indeed we were, for we had done little or nothing in that line.

There was then rather an absurd rule in "the House," based on the ineffable supremacy which all Christ Church men believed their

"House" to have over every other college in the University, that no member of the "House" should read with any one who was not also a member.

This was a rule which smacked of the days when no Canon of Christ Church had ever been a member of any other college, a feeling so exclusive that when the first out-college man was raised by a Prime Minister to the dignity of a Canon, the other Canons deliberated in chapter whether they should treat him as an equal or not.

Nowadays this rule and all rules have been so relaxed and broken-down that it is hard to find one still in force; but then we had no difficulty in finding a Christ Church coach, who gave us an hour each day, Irwin from twelve to one, and me from two to three.

It was a bore at first, yet on the whole it was rather fun. Our coach was a most charming and agreeable man. He was besides a consummate Aristotelian, and had the analytics as well as the ethics, rhetoric, and politics of the Stagyrte, at his fingers' ends. It was plain from the very first lecture that it would be our fault, not his, if we were not turned into profound metaphysicians in our University course, and as we

had plenty of time, for we had not yet passed our Little Goes, we consoled ourselves with thinking that if we were forced to read out of politeness to the Dean, we had at least taken time by the forelock.

But Little Go reminds me of something. In itself it was a most ridiculous exercise to any one who was a fair scholar. One Latin book, one Greek book, which might be the well-thumbed four plays of Euripides, edited by Porson, a decent bit of Latin prose and logic, or four books of Euclid. That was all, and yet it was wonderful how many poor wretches were plucked.

But the greatest bore about it was, that before you could present yourself for that examination, you had to produce a certificate or "testamur," that you had sat out a whole day in the Little Go school, and listened to the examination, so that when your turn came to be examined you might not excuse your ignorance by saying you did not know what sort of examination it was.

I have now before me the certificate that I, "Franciscus Franklin, ex Æde Christi," on such and such a day, "interfui in parviso per integrum tempus," and I well remember that though I had Irwin by my side it would have been intolerably dull had it not been for the ridiculous answers

which some of the unfortunates made in their *vivâ voce*. They were many of them in the Hannibal transivit Alpes summâ diligentîâ style, and I am quite sure, though most people believe these and like stories to be all inventions, that there is no answer so stupid or far-fetched that may not have well been made in the schools.

On that day I remember one unhappy fellow, who sat doing his paper-work just at my elbow, took an opportunity of whispering to me when the attention of the two examiners was directed elsewhere :

"For God's sake tell me is Protinus a sea god or an adverb ?"

Before I could reply one of the examiners turned, and my mouth was sealed. In a moment or two he was called up for his *vivâ voce*, and it then appeared from one of the examiner's remarks that he had actually treated it as a proper name, in fact, as if it had been "Proteus."

Before the Great Go, I may observe, we had to sit for a whole day in those schools too for the same reason, and as I have said, two more boring days I never spent during the whole time I was at Oxford.

And now I think the inquiries of those anxious parents about work in a former chapter,

may be considered to be answered. Here we were working hard, all for honour and glory. Alas! how often are honour and glory mere empty phantoms!

But whenever we could take a holiday or an outing we did so. Irwin was a splendid horseman, as most Irishmen are. He had brought a hack over with him, which his guardians had given him because he had done so well in Collections, and which that old uncle asserted to be the best "lepper" in all the Queen's County. On him Irwin, and I on Astomos, often went out with the hounds; and Faugh-a-ballagh, as his horse was called, found it easy to treat the loose Oxfordshire walls in the same way as he had been used to deal with those of his native country.

On Sundays, after morning chapel and breakfast, we used to go out for long rambles, and I remember one worth telling of when we and one or two more went up to Shotover, and so on over the oolite beds to Wheatley, where we had luncheon or dinner, returning when it was dark. It was in November, I recollect. In the morning, as we went along Shotover ridge, we had found a hedgehog, and as I was always fond of animals, and hedgehogs were rare in that part, I tied him up in my handkerchief and carried him along.

We were four of us, and when we turned out of our inn we were surprised to find an angry group of quarrymen standing about the door who evidently meant mischief. We had done them no harm, and had behaved well all day, but whether we were to suffer for the sins of some undergraduates who had preceded us, or whether the quarrymen acted on the general principle: "Yon's a gentleman, 'eave 'alf a brick at him," I do not know. But certain it is, that we had scarce got a hundred yards from our pot-house before stones and brickbats began to fly about us very unpleasantly.

Worse than this, we observed that the stone walls which lined the road were thronged with men who had run on in front, and were prepared to let us run the gauntlet as we passed.

Then it was that Irwin, by a bold stroke, showed that if he had been a soldier he would have been a great general. Without a moment's deliberation he charged the stone wall on one side, taking it at a bound, I was not far behind him, and the two others followed; then he ran up the side of the wall, clearing it of our foes as he went, while their allies on the other side were afraid to hurl their stones lest they should harm

their own friends, while at the same time the wall sheltered us.

So we proceeded till the wall turned, we leapt over it, and finding ourselves in an open space on a gentle rise, turned and awaited the attack of our assailants, who now evidently intended coming to close quarters.

"It is rather too great odds to fight against," said Irwin, "but, Franklin, you stand back to back with me, and let the others stand back to back, and then let them come on."

So there was a rush and an onslaught, and we fought back to back, and Irwin and I were matched against the Chicken of Wheatley, the ringleader of the assault, a retired prize-fighter. After he had a round or two with Irwin, and got the worst of it, for Irwin was tall and hit hard and sharp, as you already know, he slunk round and tried his luck with me, but here he fared much worse, for though I could not spar as well as Irwin, and was not so tall and heavy, I had the use of my fists, and besides, I held the hedgehog in my left, tied up in my handkerchief, with which, when he came on, I dabbed him in the face, letting out straight with my right directly afterwards.

But just as he was being polished off there was

a shout from our companions, who had been overwhelmed and trampled on by the ruffians who made a rush at them in a body. Irwin and I turned towards them, and at the same moment our assailants broke and fled. We picked up our comrades, one of whom had the breath beaten out of his body, and was in a fainting state. We got them with difficulty to a cottage close by, in which the sufferers were tended, while I and Irwin scoured the village in search of the constable. There were no such thing then as rural police.

Finding our attempt fruitless, we two returned to Oxford and sent a fly for the sufferers, who made their appearance about midnight. A doctor came and pronounced that though much bruised no great harm had been done to the friend who had suffered most.

Next day Irwin and I rode over to Wheatley to threaten the aggressors and to reward the inmates of the cottage, who had treated us so hospitably. As we rode over the scene of the pugilistic encounter with the Chicken of Wheatley, we beheld the lifeless corpse of my poor hedgehog, which, in the last rush, had been shaken out of my handkerchief and trampled to death, and so ended our adventure with the quarrymen of Wheatley. I forgot to mention, that when Irwin

took off his hat that night in Peck he found that a stone had passed through it, coming in at the side above his skull and passing out at the crown. He had never felt it, or had forgotten it, in the excitement of the fray.

Another of our adventures was more absurd, if it was less dangerous. Every one in Oxford, and many out of it, know Bagley Wood, famous, as I have told you before, for its nightingales, and also for its wild flowers, of which I have not told you. This was one of our most favourite walks—down St. Alds and across the Folly Bridge, and so along the road to Abingdon, and up the hill whence the best view of Oxford used to be had. It has been much changed by the railway stations which now stand there, but it must still be beautiful.

Well, one day in our rambling in the Lent term we went to Bagley Wood, and after looking for the first wild flowers, we were "ware," as they say in the ballads, of a notice nailed to a tree a good bit up, declaring that all trespassers would be prosecuted.

Now if there was one place more than another through which undergraduates supposed they had a right of way it was Bagley Wood. We therefore pelted the notice till our arms ached, and being good stone throwers, we reduced it

to a very rickety condition, but could not quite bring it down. It now began to grow dark, and we had to abandon our attack.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Irwin, "we won't be beat; we'll go home, and after hall we will come with a rope and pull it down and carry it off as a trophy."

"With all my heart," I said, and so about nine o'clock we again stood in the wood under the tree. The moon shone, or we could not have made the attempt with any success, but it so happened that the very first cast of the rope thrown up with a stone tied to the end of it caught the notice board, and then we soon had it down.

The next thing was how to carry our enemy home, for that was the great fun of the whole thing. It looked a deal bigger when it lay on the ground than when it was nailed up to the tree, but I remember I had a long macintosh cape which I had taken with me in case of accidents; this Irwin put on, and then he shoved the notice up between it and his back, and so we walked homewards, he holding it up upon one side by one of his hands held behind him, and I walking close to him and holding it on the other.

But just as we had got half-way down the hill up galloped the patrol, the only form of rural police that then existed, and asked us if we knew where the fire was. The time I speak of was in the thick of the Swing Fires, when labourers used to burn corn because bread was so dear. That form of agrarian outrage has at least vanished with the Corn Laws.

We said we knew nothing about any fire, and asked in our turn where it was supposed to be.

"Oh! Radley way," said the sergeant of the patrol. "Good-night, gentlemen," for he guessed that we were gownsmen, and away he galloped with his attendant.

"That was rather a near thing," said Irwin. "What could we have said had they searched us, and found us with this notice? By this time we should have been on our way to Abingdon Gaol, if not to Oxford Castle. Lucky he saw we were gownsmen, quite incapable of being up to any mischief. But do you know it is most awfully heavy this bit of wood?"

So heavy did we find it, that at the bottom of the hill we sat down and took a rest. Then getting bolder, we took the notice between us, and carried it almost to the turnpike, and there Irwin had to sneak it up his back again; and so with

infinite trouble we bore it in triumph into Peck, and there, under my sofa, it remained for many months, warning all men in that hiding-place that all "trespassers in this wood would be punished with the utmost rigour of the law."

It was a freak of folly not very disgraceful, I hope, and to me, at least, that spring walk in the dark to Bagley Wood, and the notes of the wild birds, and the brightness of the moon, and the thud with which our enemy came down from the tree, not to speak of the episode of the patrol and the Swing Fires, now long since extinct along with the patrol, all combine to make that expedition with Irwin stand out in my memory in bold relief.

The best of the joke was that as soon as we had got it home and the excitement was over, we neither of us cared one bit about it.

"I won't have it in my rooms," said Irwin; "let it stay in yours," and there accordingly it did stay, till its very existence under my sofa was forgotten.

Dear me, how very childish this all seems now, and yet how natural and amusing it seemed then.



CHAPTER XIX.

OUR DEGREES DRAW NEAR.

So our time passed away at Oxford. The days, and weeks, and months, and years seemed to fly, and before we knew where we were, we had been at Oxford more than two years and a half, and we were both of us twenty-one. Twenty-one! fancy that! How old we seemed, and what good resolutions we made, and how we swore to love one another for ever, and to be fast friends through life. Irwin was now like a second son to my mother, for he always came to us for part of the long vacation, and every Easter he came to Buttersteep for the whole of that short holiday. Every day he seemed to grow handsomer, and every day I am sure he grew in grace.

I have not troubled you much with my reli-

gion or his, for I think religion a very private and a very sacred thing, and many have it who are supposed to have none at all, and many have it not who are thought to be in heart and soul religious.

But, if you must know, we were High Churchmen, as the term was understood in those days. We delighted in Newman and Pusey, and we were disgusted at the clamour raised by their opponents. Many and many a Sunday we lost our dinners to listen to Newman preaching at five at St. Mary's, and from our very youth, partly, no doubt, owing to the influence of the abbey in which we had so long worshipped together, we admired intoning and choral services, and thought all other forms of worship flat and tame.

And yet, if any one had asked us whether we were Romanizers, or inclined to Rome, we should have repudiated the imputation with scorn. No! we were Anglicans, as far removed from the errors of Rome on the one side, as we were from the delusions of dissent on the other. If any one came too near the edge on either side, and fell off from the true Anglican faith, it was not our fault, but their mistake; so, in all the honesty and sincerity of our hearts, we were attached to the doctrines of the Church of England—to her ritual

and liturgy, as we had been educated in it from our childhood; in matters of faith, in that morning of our intellect, we had no doubts or difficulties, and we accepted the Bible, and the Prayer-book, and the Articles, and the Creeds with a generous enthusiasm and conviction, which are quite refreshing to me when I look back at my earliest religious existence.

"My dear fellow!" said Irwin, when I told him something which Mr. Chrysostom had said to me about Strauss' "*Leben Jesu*," "there is a time for all things, and with us this is the time for faith. If doubts must come, and if we must lose our faith, as those German divines tell us, don't you see it is all the more necessary that we should have faith now, else how should we have any to lose when the time for doubts come?"

And again he used to say, "I would sooner not have been born than been an unbeliever. What a comfort faith in God is, even in our small trials; and what a much greater comfort it must be when the real troubles of life come!"

Poor fellow! how right he was, and how right-minded!

It was curious to see how vice lowered its colours, and even hid its face before him. I think the tone of the House improved greatly while we

were up. I say "we," not as though I had anything to do with it, for if it improved, it was all Irwin's doing.

"The Dons," he used to say, "make a great mistake in lecturing men about their vices. I don't believe that any one was ever lectured out of wickedness."

"But," I said, "you would not have them suffer it. They must protest and lecture against evil habits."

"Of course they must, but the question here is whether they do any good by it. You see a Don, who lives a life almost entirely secluded from that of the undergraduates, and who only sees them at lectures, or at a still greater distance in chapel, becomes, as it were, another creature, in a separate state of existence. They have been likened to Gods; and so they are; the Dons are Gods, but very little ones. All their warnings, and all their denunciations against wickedness have been uttered before, and in a voice of thunder, out of the Bible; and any man who comes limping after the Bible, and declaiming against sin, runs the risk of a failure, and even of ridicule."

"But what would you have them do?" I asked.

"Do!" said Irwin, "I would do many things if I dared. How very tempting it would be to re-model and re-fashion the Dons, who are, after all, only flesh and blood like ourselves and neither gods nor idols, into something more human, so far as the undergraduates are concerned."

"And how would you do it?"

"I would make them mix more with the undergraduates, and not shake them off so entirely as soon as ever they become lecturers or tutors. How many good fellows have we seen full of life and feeling stiffen and harden into stone as soon as ever they take a degree and college office. Now, if instead of cutting themselves off entirely from their old associates and associations, or, what is worse, making one or two favourites, they were to live more with those whom they are appointed to teach, they would not have to lecture and preach against vice, for their lives and company and conversation would be living lectures, and lectures and sermons too that would be listened to. But now an undergraduate is lectured to and preached at, and it all goes in at one ear and comes out at the other."

"But don't you think the Dons would lose caste and character if they mixed with us like ordinary mortals?"

“Not at all, or if they did, it would only be a proof that they were unfit for the office they professed to fill. And now,” he said, “very seriously mark my words. It will not, of course, be in our time, but the day will come when the Dons—I do not mean the older ones, they are of the stone, stony, and of the wood, wooden—but the younger Dons will mix with the undergraduates much more than we conceive it possible now. They will have to unbend and confess that they are of like passions with us, and then they will cease to lecture and preach and bore, for that sort of intercession will be needless, and, as I have said, the purity and goodness of their lives will be worth more than all the sermons in the world.”

I was in Oxford not so very long ago, never having set foot in the University for years and years, and then I recalled those words of Irwin, for they seemed prophetic. I saw some few of the old breed of Dons still remaining like landmarks in the midst of the flood of change which had come over the place of our education. I do not say that the changes were all for the better. I saw undergraduates much worse dressed than the lowest “cads,” rushing about the High Street without cap and gown. I saw them smoking everywhere. Yes, even in the “Tom Quad,” and

"Peck," under the very noses of the Dons. I saw no chapels, but only roll-calls in some colleges. All this I saw, and much more, that would have shocked one's moral sense in the good old times, but I also saw one thing which counter-balanced all these innovations, and that was this very change which Irwin had predicted. I saw the younger Dons living with undergraduates as though they were their elder brothers; they had become more human, though perhaps less divine, and the good effects were shown in the cessation of lecturing and preaching against vice, and in an enormous diminution in the vice itself, against which the Dons in the old days used to inveigh so bitterly, but which they did little or nothing in the way of example and companionship to extirpate.

I could tell you much more about Irwin and his conversation, but I must get on, for not of Irwin alone but of me and my fortunes is this book written.





CHAPTER XX.

THE BLOW FALLS.

WHY have I the heart at this distance of time to write what I am about to tell you? Even now a horror comes over me as I think of that old sorrow.

But it must be told.

We were just two and twenty. We had both fulfilled our promise to the Dean, and were really reading men. We had done all that could be required of us in that way, had been regular at lectures, constant to our coach, and to make assurance surer we had spent the greater part of one vacation at Swanage, very dully but very profitably so far as work went.

It was in the October term, and we had made up our minds to go in for our degrees at that

examination. Just before we went up, we had stayed a fortnight at Buttersteep, where we found everything flourishing, and the place and grounds wonderfully improved in the three years it had been in my mother's hands.

Irwin used to laugh when he looked at all that Grinditch had done in ornamental planting and gardening, under my mother's eye, and say,

"Who would think now that silver dug up by Mexican half-breeds should make a Berkshire heath smile? and as there is a deal of iron in this sandy soil, I suppose we may call it the transmutation of metals."

Even Mr. Limpus cheered up before our youth and health and strength, and for a while forgot his imaginary ailments. Quinsey, diphtheria—though it was then not known by that name—went with all physic to the winds, and our melancholy clergyman became for a season a laughing philosopher.

"I wish you two were always here," said Squills; "you'd make another man of Limpus."

But we could not stay. I wished we had—that I had taken a fever, and that Irwin had stayed to nurse me; but it could not be. We were to go to Oxford, and to Oxford we went.

"I shan't do anything but read this term," said Irwin; "that is to say, I will only ride a little. The water and tennis must wait till the examination is over, and then, perhaps, for old acquaintance' sake, we'll give Duck-legged Jem a turn."

Somehow or other, I was less easy about my place in the examination than Irwin. It was but natural, for he was better and broader across the back, if I may use the term, in every way than I was.

"As for me, I shan't even ride," I said; "and I'll tell Simmonds"—he was the horse-dealer—"I shan't want Astomos this term."

"Do as you like," said Irwin; "only as Faugh-a-ballagh is here, and has been eating his head off all the Long, I want to get back some of the money I have spent on him, and I can only do that by riding him or selling him, and I won't sell him."

This diversity of exercise separated Irwin and myself for the first time since we had been in Oxford. We thought it was to be only for a while. So when he got on Faugh-a-ballagh and rode off for his constitutional from Canterbury Gate, I started on a long walk up Headington Hill, or along the Abingdon Road, or by the

parks—which were then fields, and not parks—towards Marston and Somertown.

Sometimes my coach went with me, and all along the road put subtle questions to me out of Aristotle; and as for the Rhetoric, and the *Eikota* and *Semeia*, words of power to all students of Aristotle, I had them all—at least, he said I had them all—at my fingers' ends, or, better still, at the tip of my tongue.

So the term wore on, and when we dined with the Dean—for the dear old “Brümbär,” as the Germans would have called him, several times asked us to dinner while we were undergraduates—he was graciously pleased to ask how we felt about our classes; and when we said we could not possibly say where we should be, he growled out,

“But I know where you should be, and that is in the first class.”

To which we could only answer, we hoped it might be so.

“They say,” said the Dean, “there’s no certainty in anything. Nor is there. But men may make things almost a certainty; and all I can say is, if you have not done so, you ought to be ashamed of yourselves.”

“But there may be accidents, Mr. Dean,” said Irwin.

"I know of no accident that ought to prevent you being in the first class, Mr. Irwin," said the Dean, and then he turned to speak to some one else.

Short-sighted Dean!

Well, as I have said, the term wore on. The Senior Proctor issued his mandate that the names of candidates for examination in the Great Go, or Final Schools, as they call it now, must be sent in by a certain day. We both sent in our names, and in due time they appeared in that long three-column list, which announced that these were the men who were to be examined in polite learning or arts. *Literæ Humaniores* was the term, as is well known.

Among them stood "Franklin, Franciscus, ex Æde Xti," and a little after, "Irwin, Georgius, ex Æde Xti."

"We shan't be far off one another," said Irwin. "Perhaps we may be both in for vivâ voce on the same day."

"We shall soon see," I said, "when the list is weeded of those who go in for a pass."

To understand which I must explain that the pass men were examined first, who took up by far the greater number of names, and then came the turn of the candidates for honours, who had

a separate and severer examination. As F and I are not so far apart—the names being arranged alphabetically in the list—and as six men were taken for vivâ voce in each day, there was at least a possibility that we two bosom friends would be in for that crowning point of our examination on the same day. For first came five days' paper-work, then one day's vivâ voce, at the close of which the examiners gave you a "testamur," or certificate, that So-and-so had satisfied them; and last of all, when every one had been examined, down to Z—if there were any one with that initial to his name—the class list came out, and every one knew where his place was.

I dare say all this is needless information to you, but it consoles me to dwell in memory on these few days, and to live over again in such little things as the appearance of that list of names in which ours stood.

I remember there was a man named Fuge in that examination. I did not know him from Adam, and I know not what has become of him. And I also remember that his name was James, or "Jacobus" in Latin. When the list appeared, his name stood, of course, thus, "Fuge, Jacobus," of such and such a college; but as soon it was stuck up, some wit scratched out the s in Jacobus, and

put in *m* in its place; and after it he wrote, "False regimen of the verb," taking "Fuge" as if it came from fugio, and Jacobus as if it were governed by the verb. It is not much to remember, nor was it a very great piece of wit, but it remains in my memory, indelibly engrafted with other remembrances of that time.

It was while the pass-men were in their agony, and the day after an unhappy friend of ours had made a sad exhibition of himself in his *vivâ voce*, in the course of which he refused to answer who Saul was; and when we asked him why he could be so silly, the only answer he could give was, that he knew all about Saul, but would not answer, lest they should take him into "Kings." He also was asked what he knew of Jehu, and all he could say, after long deliberation, was that he was "a famous driver," the end being that he was ignominiously plucked.

I say it was while the pass-men were in their agony, and while we, who knew better, were laughing at the absurdity of their mistakes that the blow fell, which brought woe on me more than it ever entered into my heart to conceive.

I had been out for my walk alone, and I had been thinking all the time of something that Irwin had said the night before when we had

been sitting up late, after rubbing up our Herodotus together, for Herodotus takes such a wide range, and tells such very strange stories, that it is just as well to polish him a little before one goes into the schools.

"There's no use bothering any more about it," said Irwin. "We have done all we can, and the best can do no more."

"But are we the best, or among the best, that is just the question?" I rejoined.

"Silly fellow," said Irwin. "Did I say we were the best? I said nothing of the kind. I only said that we had done all we could; the examiners must decide the rest."

"But what do you think? How do you feel about your First?"

"I feel nothing and I know nothing," said Irwin. "That, too, is in the lap of the gods," using his favourite expression.

Then his face took a more serious and thoughtful expression, and he looked, if I may so speak, transfigured as he went on.

"You know, Franklin, what the old fellow," pointing to the volume we had just been reading, "thought. The ancients had a notion that the gods were often jealous of man. They had a grudge against him when he was too prosperous

and happy, and delighted to dash him down lest he should be equal to them. This, at least, we know, and know better than the ancients, that God is just and envies no man. Now, do you know, this examination seems to me very like the day of judgment; we shall be all right if we don't incur the anger of the examiners, but who can say if they may not be as fallible as the ancient gods, and be governed by crotchets and caprice? For myself, if they were as God I should not fear. For in His hands, with all my sins and weaknesses, which are manifold, I should feel safe. And as He rules the hearts of the examiners, I seem to have a firm assurance that all will be well, and that we shall, at least, not disgrace ourselves. And now good-night. For myself, I have cast away all care. This, too, like everything in life, is in the hand of God."

Next morning was one of those lovely autumn days, which England owns, as if they belonged to her of right, against all the world. It was fine and bright and warm, and there was just a golden haze enough to make all things luminous and large without obscuring them.

After breakfast Irwin, who had scarcely said a word, jumped up and said, "Faugh-a-ballagh has not been out for two days, and I have not hunted

once this term. The meet is at Garsington. Yes, I will hunt to-day."

All at once he seemed so elated at the prospect of his ride, that his eyes glowed, and I thought I had never seen him look so beautiful before.

Yes! he looked like the sun-god, so fair and ruddy, and with rich golden curls, and such a golden down upon his face, the first fruits of his coming beard.

"Good-bye, good-bye!" he said, when he had pulled on his long boots, and dressed himself so neatly, and yet so quietly. He was none of your loud horsey class. To him blue ties, spotted with white, and horseshoe pins, and whips with foxes' heads were hateful.

"Good-bye, good-bye," he said, "what a joy it is to live and breathe and feel young and strong on such a morning as this."

Those were his last words, and then he was gone, and I watched him across Peckwater towards Canterbury Gate.

Well! but I was coming home from my lonely walk, and thinking of what he had said about the examination being like the day of judgment, and how, wherever we were, we were still in God's hand.

As I turned in at Tom I met the porter, who said, touching his hat,

"Have you heard anything, Mr. Franklin?"

"Heard anything! Heard what!" I exclaimed, my thoughts reverting to my mother.

"This about Mr. Irwin, sir. He's had a bad fall and lies at Dorchester, and the Dean has been asking for you, and Dr. Wingfield has gone out to see him."

I saw the Dean and the Censor, and every one that was to be seen, but no one could add anything to the information I had already heard. Irwin had fallen or been thrown from his horse, and lay at Dorchester.

Did I fly to him? Of course I did. It was not long before I was on Astomos, who was fortunately fresh, and galloping on the Dorchester Road. I have often reproached myself since for galloping so hard to a broken heart. If I had gone slower, I should not have known the sad news so soon.

As I rode up to the door of the inn at Dorchester, I met Dr. Wingfield coming out. He was one of the kindest of men, and had done what little doctoring Irwin and I had needed for us all the time we had been up.

"Be brave, Franklin," he said. "It is all over. He is dead, and must have died at once."

"Dead!" I cried; "dead! oh let me see him,"

and I ran upstairs and forced myself into the room, while the good doctor slowly followed.

Yes, there he lay, so softly and so gently, on that bed, as though he were sound asleep. His face was very serious and solemn, but, for all that, it bore a sweet smile as of relief and rest. It seemed as though he had solved the great secret, and said, without speaking—

“Come, follow me—it is not so terrible.”

“He is not dead, he cannot be dead,” I said, turning to the doctor, who now stood by my side.

“He must have died at once,” he said, “for his neck is broken. It was all the work of a moment, and he died without pain or suffering.”

The shock was so great that I could not weep at once, and, fortunately, such is human nature, that I could not realize in the least the greatness of the sorrow that had overtaken me, or the loss that this death would be to me.

For the moment an insane kind of curiosity seemed to possess me to know how it all happened, and I thought myself lucky to find a farmer who had been by at the moment, and who had helped to bring him to the inn.

I found him below, refreshing himself at the bar, and there was a ghastly contrast between the tobacco and beer and bread and cheese, and

that smiling, serious face serenely resting on the bed above stairs.

That honest farmer said little, but it was more than enough.

"I seen the young gentleman all through the run, for my mare, Bess, be a right-down good 'un, and me and him on the brown horse was neck and neck. I never saw horse or man go straighter nor better, 'most like a bird. Bullfinch, and post and rail, and ox-fence, and brook—it was all the same to him. Well, we killed our fox, after a pretty run, and the young gent got the brush. We brought it here with him, and, dead or alive, it belongs to him. Well, just as we were drawing another cover, and the hounds were beginning to speak, his horse seemed to get impatient, though one would have thought he had enough already, and the young gent, just to amuse him and humour him, put him at a little bit of a grip with a little fence not that high. He could have taken it at a stride. Now, whether the horse didn't think it worth trying at, no one can tell, or whether he crossed his feet for carelessness, no one can tell either, but so it was they both came down, and the young gent, instead of getting up and laughing at the cropper, as we all thought he would, lay still as death, and when we took

him up he never stirred hand nor foot, and when we listened for his breath, it was gone, and he was dead."

Even this short and graphic account was too much for me. I rushed upstairs and sat by that bed of death, while the doctor returned to Oxford in his fly, to make arrangements for bringing Irwin back to the House.





CHAPTER XXI.

IRWIN'S GUARDIANS ARRIVE.

Do not ask me how I spent the week that followed. Of course I did everything for him that I could. Over and over again I said, and felt, "He cannot be dead. He will return from his ride. This is all a hideous dream."

But he never came. Yes, he came in a shell and hearse, and then we bore him—eight of us, who were his friends—up to his rooms in Peck, which were never to be gladdened by the sound of his light footsteps again. There he lay, still so smiling, in his coffin covered with flowers, and looking only a little more serious and solemn as the week wore away. Never was any man more beloved, and never was any one more mourned. A gloomy cloud hung over the House,

and every one seemed to feel my loss as though it were his own.

Then, too, it came out how good and religious he had been. It is a fearful trial of a young man's character to be taken away thus in a moment, and to have the last trump sounded in his ears without one instant's warning. There all his little secrets and belongings lay open to our eyes, and if he had done any wrong, or had any secret league with evil, it must have been revealed.

But I, who read his letters and looked over his memoranda, and who, besides, knew him as though he had been my brother, and nearer than a brother—I know that never was a man whose conversation must have been purer and sweeter than his.

There was nothing to remind one of vice, and everything of virtue in the aspect of those rooms. There lay his Bible, and there his Prayer-book, with the markers between the morning psalms which he must have read before he started on that fatal ride. Here was the "Christian Year," and those psalms and hymns which he was never tired of reading alone or aloud. Here his accounts, so regularly kept, and the list of letters, received and answered, of which he made it a duty to enter a record.

And here, too, was that diary which he regularly kept, behaving in this better than I did, according to Mr. Chrysostom's views, though, as you know, I could never take to it.

In a word, he seemed as if he had made up his mind that when Death came he would find him ready, and no doubt this was the feeling which lay beneath the words that he had spoken the very night before his death.

One of my most melancholy duties was to write to his guardians, and to tell them, and, if possible, to break to them, the sad intelligence of their ward's death.

These were not, as you know, the days of telegraphs, and so my letter did not come limping after the electric spark which tells so much and so little in such meagre words, often distorted by the carelessness of a clerk.

Yet, after all, what could I tell them, and how could I break it to them! I could only hope that they cared less for him than I did, and I believe it was the fact.

Meanwhile, all the arrangements for the funeral—fancy Irwin's funeral!—were in my hands. The authorities were good, and let me have them to myself. I suppose they thought it would console me.

But in one thing the Dean was very good. He came to see me in my rooms, a thing, I believe, unheard of in the history of the House at that time, though, for what I know, it may be common enough now that all lines of demarcation between Don and undergraduate seem to be broken down.

Yes! he came to see me in my rooms, and what he came to say was this.

"Mr. Franklin," he said, "no one feels the misfortune which has befallen the House more than I do. I do not now speak of private sorrow, for yours, I know, is greater than that of any one person can be. But it is of public grief that I have something to say, and it is that I should like Mr. Irwin to be buried in the cathedral of the House of which he was an ornament and an example, and to which, had he lived, he would have done still greater honour."

I must say that I thought nothing could now surprise or interest me. I did what I had done mechanically, but this idea that Irwin should rest in the cathedral among the ornaments of the House was the first germ of consolation that seemed to spring up in my heart, and showed that it was still alive to emotion.

Still all I could say to the Dean was that this

would of course depend upon Irwin's guardians who were expected to arrive the day after.

"Of course," said the Dean, "we can do nothing without their sanction; but they will surely see that the fittest resting-place for their ward will be here where he is so loved."

Irwin to be buried in the cathedral! What a mockery to suppose it could be any real consolation, and yet, for all that, for a time at least, it did console me.

This was when about half that melancholy week was over. The next day, not one, but both Irwin's guardians arrived, having been, fortunately, in Dublin, and able to start without a moment's delay.

Poor things and poor me! What a sad interview that was, though it was with utter strangers.

I met them at the coach—the very same coach from which I had seen Irwin descend so lightly on that evening when we first went up, and which had seemed so melancholy till he came.

There was no mistaking them. From the inside they alighted slowly and sadly, their faces showing the mourning which they had not had time to provide.

I went up to them at once, and said, "You are Irwin's friends."

"Yes," they said, "lead us to him." And then, with bowed heads, we all walked in the dark and damp streets to the House.

When they had reached *the* rooms, I left them to themselves with him, and crossed the staircase to my own rooms, and wept.

It was very touching to see that old pair, so jealous of one another while their ward was alive, and so united in affection for him when he was gone.

After awhile the uncle came across to me.

"I have left her there," he said, "praying over the boy. How grand he looks in death!"

In reply I could only sob at first, but in a moment or two I recovered myself, and said,

"The Dean hopes you will let him be buried here in the cathedral."

"All the Irwins, father and son, for generations, have been buried at Monrath, in the Queen's County," said the old gentleman. "But it is a great honour. We will consider of it."

Then he returned to Irwin's aunt—she, you know, was a Romanist, and in yet a little while they both stepped into my rooms.

"We have agreed," said the uncle, "though not without some hesitation, that he had better

lie here among those who love him in the cathedral of this ancient house."

And now let me relieve my grief by telling you what these guardians were like.

The aunt looked as though she had stepped out of one of Gainsborough's or Sir Joshua's pictures. She looked old, and yet she might have belonged to any time. Small and slight, and yet very dignified and serious-looking. She was evidently no common woman. She had a fair complexion—Irwin's mother had been her only sister—and a slightly aquiline nose, and luminous blue eyes, like his eyes, once seen never to be forgotten, and indeed, it is better not to forget them, as they are so seldom seen. Her dress was plain and rich, all sad colour—a sort of perpetual mourning—passing all crape and bombazine, and her hair was plaited plain across her brow, and though she was over fifty, without a gray hair in it.

Altogether she was a pattern of neatness and dignity, and though she had hurried off at a moment's notice, she looked as though she had just dressed herself in morning attire.

They brought a man and a maid with them, but I have forgotten them; and all this time you must suppose them looking after the lug-

gage, and taking rooms at the Angel, and buying mourning, or anything else that occurs to you. One of the great mercies of such a calamity is the necessity which will not be denied, of dressing yourself as the world thinks respect for the dead demands. As if the dead cared in the least for the colour of any man's coat, or for the dress their mothers, or sisters, or aunts wear. If they think at all, they have very different things to think of.

Irwin's uncle was a thin, tall man, very gaunt and meagre, and with a strange elfin expression of face. You may see it in Chaucer's picture, if any of you know it, and if you do not it is worth looking at it. He calls his own look elfish or elfin, and he means by it that weird, wandering look which some faces wear, and which seems to say that the thoughts which lie hid in that face are not of an every-day stamp.

He was not well-dressed, and yet not ill-dressed, but there was an air of slovenliness about him, as though his clothes had been pitch-forked on him, and that they had never been brushed or cared for.

It was easy at once to see how it must have been that the pair could never have agreed, even if Irwin had not lain between them their bone of contention.

Poor things, there they stood, the uncle more broken down than the aunt, both bowed with grief, at having to bend over that comely corpse.

I knew not what to say, but at last I faltered out some words which said, or meant to say, that they had better leave me alone with Irwin, and retire to seek rest and refreshment at their inn.

Then it was that the aunt spoke in a sweet silvery voice :

“I wish for no food but what may be brought me *there*. Suffer me to stay by him and pray.”

The uncle tried to oppose this wish, but he was powerless to bend her will. She must and would stay, and the lower she pitched her voice the more resolute she grew.

As for me I thought, “Why should she not stay ? and what have any of us to do but to stay by him and gaze on him all we can ?”

So she stayed, and never left those melancholy rooms till the coffin was closed. It was against all rule that a woman should sleep in the house. But her grief was above all rule, and so she stayed.

And as she stayed the elfin-faced uncle stayed too, eating and drinking the little he needed, in my rooms, and by night sleeping on my sofa.

Did I tell you there was an inquest ? one of

those useless inquiries, where there is really nothing to inquire into. By the way, there was something which you will not find at any inquest now-a-days. There was a *deodand* on his horse. Poor Faugh-a-ballagh, for his carelessness in crossing his feet, or for bungling and boggling at that low fence and grip, was fined fifty shillings by the jury. That absurd custom has long since vanished, but when Irwin died it was in full force, and his horse had to pay—that is his executors and assignees had to pay the two pounds ten to some one as a gift to God.

I do not complain of this, or of anything, or any person. Every one was as kind and considerate as they could be, and gave us as little trouble and annoyance as they could, but the “coroner’s law” was inconsiderate, and there seemed to me at least an absurdity in inquiry how Irwin died, when the great fact that weighed us all down in woe and desolation, was that he was dead, and that we should never see him alive among us.





CHAPTER XXII.

THE FUNERAL.

LET me see, when was the funeral? He died on a Saturday, and we buried him the Saturday after. How sad the House was all that time, like one family plunged at once into mourning. From the Dean down to the meanest shoeblack, all wept for him. He was as Balder, the sun-god, whom blind Fate had smitten with the mistletoe twig, and slain against its will, but yet it had slain him. All wept for him, and if tears could have availed anything to bring him back, he would have been alive the day after his death. But like Balder he was lost and gone, and we all felt that though we, some of us, might go to him, he never would return to us.

By the Dean's desire I went with the uncle to the cathedral to choose a spot for his grave.

Fancy my choosing Irwin's grave! What should I have said a week before had any one said, "This day week he will be dead, and you choosing a site for his grave?" what could I have said but that the ways of God are inscrutable, and past finding out? Now was the time to think on Mr. Chrysostom's mediæval story, and to bow before the will of God.

We chose it in the south aisle of the nave, not far from the south transept, and there the gravedigger set to work.

All that the uncle said was—

"Let it be a deep one, so that no one shall ever disturb his bones."

And deep it was—eight feet deep—right down to the original soil, on which the church of St. Frideswide was built, and through layer after layer of bones and stones and charcoal, showing that a conflagration had passed over the spot before there had been any church at all, and while the place had been a wild wood.

All this time the dear old aunt stayed by Irwin's side as he grew more and more monumental, but remaining quite unchanged in feature till the men came and closed him up, and his sweet face was shut up from us for ever. That, I think, was the greatest pang of all, for so long.

as he lay there with his face looking up to heaven and his poor pale hands meekly folded over his bosom strewn with flowers and evergreen leaves, I felt as if it were all a dream, and that he still might wake up and return to us.

Then for the first time—it was midday on the Friday—the old aunt went away to the Angel with her maid, and remained there till that black Saturday came which was to consign Irwin to the dust.

It was a bright November morning, and the sun, with his unwonted radiance, seemed to mock our woe. It was even finer than the day of Irwin's death, when, as the Scots would call it, "fey" with the feeling of approaching death, he cried out, "What a joy it is to live!"

Not for him was the saying verified, "Happy the corse that the rain rains on." Not a drop fell. No, it was fine and dry and bright.

At two o'clock the sad procession was formed in Peckwater. Forth came the choristers, and the singing men, and the undergraduates, and the Bachelors, Masters, Canons, and the Dean. In this order they were marshalled below, while the bearers, scouts of the House, came up and bore him gently and slowly down that staircase. Then after these came that uncle and aunt, hand in

hand, all the differences reconciled and extinguished by this common calamity. Then I came walking alone. There was no one who could claim such a share in Irwin as to make him my equal in grief. Yes, I walked alone, and I felt alone, and as if I could never have another companion on earth. Then came some more of his friends in the House, old Westminster, and after them a number of out-college men, also his friends—for was he not the most popular of men?—fell into the procession, and swelled its length.

And so across Peckwater and through Kill-canon, and past the Dean's door, where we had stood in such trepidation when we first came up, and into the passage leading to the cathedral, the choir and choristers all the while singing hymns such as he loved.

When we had all entered the cathedral they rested the coffin in the centre of the transept, while the Dean, with the greatest feeling, read the first part of the mournful service.

Then came the last sad scene, the bearers lifted the coffin up and bore it to the grave, which yawned dark and deep, and so we lowered him into his last resting-place on earth, and his friends pressed forward after that impressive warning of

dust to dust, and threw flowers into the grave, till the coffin itself was almost hid.

It was a sad sight, if any one had time or thought to turn to it, to see those two relatives standing still hand in hand over the brink of that early grave.

When it was all over I bore them away with great difficulty. As for the aunt, I think she would willingly have stayed there for ever, and what was very striking was, that her grief seemed to have levelled all religious barriers between us. I have known Romanists, and very good ones too, who would as soon have thought of becoming heretics as of entering a Protestant place of worship. Yet here was this dear old lady, "bigoted to the ould faith," as the uncle afterwards told me, standing side by side with us Protestants, and devoutly joining in our beautiful burial service.

Having gently led them away and handed them over to one of my friends to accompany them to my rooms, I returned for a while to see that the earth and stones were properly filled in over Irwin. Not till it was all filled in and beaten down did I leave the spot. Woe was me to think that eight feet below that pavement

now lay all that was left on earth of Irwin, my bosom friend.

Let me hasten to finish this sad chapter. That evening the uncle and aunt left Oxford for Ireland, and on me fell the labour of love to look into Irwin's affairs, pay his few bills, pack up his letters and books, and to give some of his furniture and ornaments to his friends.

How my heart welled over with grief when I came upon old letters of my own, in which I had poured out my heart to him. Need I add that they soon found their way to the flames. For what can be more heart-burning and heart-breaking than old letters, which some people keep with such magpie tenacity?

But in all my searches and inquiries, it was very sweet and consoling to find—what I was sure of before, indeed—how very good, and virtuous, and right-minded he had been. There was nothing among his papers, or in his rooms, to suggest a thought of anything but goodness and purity. He had passed through an awful trial—cut off without a moment's warning, and without a thought that he must die so soon—and he came out of it blameless and unscathed.

There, too, was that diary, several years of it.

kept regularly from day to day, and sketches of what he had seen, and done, and thought for all those years.

I could not bear the sight of it for years—for that uncle and aunt were good, and let me keep it as my own—but when I did find strength to read it, it was most touching to see how often my name occurred in it, and how tender his affection for me always was. That, indeed, I already knew, by the evidence of my own senses, from our constant intercourse; but even to this day it consoles me to read, “Walked with dearest Frank to Bagley Wood, and talked philosophy.” Nay, it even contains a brief record of our expedition to bring home that sign-board, in the following words, “Went with Frank to Bagley Wood, and, like fools, brought home a sign-board.”

And now I do not know why I should trouble you any further with this part of my life. I had enjoyed, and I had now lost, the greatest blessing that a young man can have—the love and friendship of one of his own age and sex. There is a time in every one’s life when the heart desires nothing better than to be bosom friend with one man. This friendship passes away naturally with most men, and it had now gone from me by a sad calamity, which endued it with a lasting and most tragic feature.

Irwin had been all in all to me. From no other man could I now derive that sweet consolation for which every one's heart yearns. That consolation I was now to seek, and how I sought it, and whether I found it, will be found in the next volume.

END OF VOL. II.

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